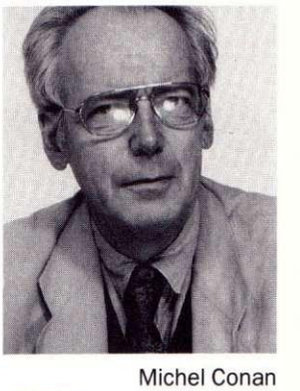
User Oriented Architectural Design in a Critical Perspective

by Michel Conan

Criticism of authoritarian practice in architecture has led to efforts by architects to take users' points of view into account and to develop an adaptive model of planning. Yet results have not been convincing. A critical look at a few attempts leads to questions about the existing relationships between planning activities, the development of organizational culture, and about practical morality within an organization when groups of users hold conflicting values and purposes.

EVEN THOUGH ARCHITECTURE MAY CLAIM a long history, the practice of design has been changing rapidly during the 20th century. At the beginning of the century usual practice follows the *professional model* illustrated, for instance, by F. L. Wright's practice. A client who wants a house to be built for himself starts a relationship with an architect. They devise a brief in common, and then the architect proceeds to produce proposals that are reviewed in common, through a process in which the architect is assuming a patronizing role. After world war two a new situation developed. Public authorities as well as very large companies took a leading role in several domain of building construction. A new, *rationalist model* was devised and was acknowledged by professional organization such as RIBA as a founding reference for all practitioners: the client was supposed to set goals, then to commission a space programming, to be used as a complete list of requirements by the architect for the design to take place. The final result was supposed to be reviewed according to its ability to fit the requirements written into the program. Extensive use of this model has lead to wide spread criticism of the architecture of a "bureaucratic consumption society" to quote H. Lefebvre celebrated phrase[1]. Architectural practice was then currently attacked as a paradigmatic instance of the denial of everyday life's culture in the name of instrumental rationality by all the planners in contemporary society. In an effort to answer this challenge, attempts at public participation in architectural design have led to a half decade of experiments leading to spirited debates among architects and eventually to two new models: the *artistic model* where the architect reaches first and foremost for formal invention, and an *adaptive model* where he attempts to adapt the design to the conflicting demands of all participants in the decision making process, including



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representative of the users whenever they are present. We shall concentrate here on practical consequences of the adaptive model while making some reference to the professional model and to the rationalist model.

Four empirical sources of information

Examples could be taken from a limitless number of sources. Four sources shall be used here: the evaluation by its inhabitants of a public housing neighborhood near Nancy that was designed by Alain Sarfati in 1975, a new pediatric department in a Children's hospital which is currently being designed by Marc Beri, a study of F. L. Wright's relationships with his clients, and some experience gathered with Eric Daniel-Lacombe about design of new primary schools with attached kindergarten and children's leisure center in the Paris suburbs. Three of these sources provide information about the design process, and three of them provide information about the response by users to the actual building.

Unexpected aspects of the course of events in adaptive design

In order to enable them to get first hand information from future users architects and building authorities usually try to convene as many users as possible at several occasions during the programming and the design process. In many suburban schools a large group was gathered together in order to make proposals for the program, and to take part in a review process during the design. In the hospital case a preliminary program had been written before the architect was chosen, and different groups were assembled by the hospital building manager according to the aspect of the future building that was under review. Moreover a general assembly was called from time to time to make final commitments on proposed designs.

But whatever the practical details of the organization of interactions between the architect and future users, it must be noted that the actual events used not to follow exactly the expected course:

- Certain categories of users were not called or would fail to turn up at the meetings or to speak up their grievances. Low ranking employees were most prominent among the first ones, while final users such as parents, children, hospital guests or their family members were most conspicuous among the second ones.
- Some members of the organization or some influential users would ignore deliberately the architectural design arena, and would rather wield their power in order to influence indirectly the final outcome.

- Some participant members may discover a few weeks after they have agreed to a design that it fails to respond to some of their needs which they had totally overlooked at the time of group discussion. In the hospital, for instance, it was discovered after the second overall sketch had been approved by the general assembly that one of the departments should have its own anesthesia group which almost tripled its ground floor requirements, not to speak of its technical appliances!

Such aspects make the course of planning rather more difficult than expected, and force the architect into being cautious about the confidence with which he may proceed according to the limited information that he receives from the various stakeholders. Yet this kind of effort in order to reach valid statements of actual needs for the sake of planning the future building exhibits a few more disturbing features:

- The design process may provide an arena for the development of internal strife within the organization. In the hospital it provided an opportunity for disposing of the services of a "social worker", in several schools it provided an arena for internal conflicts between members of the municipality, or between the municipality and the representative of the ministry of education: The program or some design aspect of the building being taken as a trade-off in a broader conflict.
- Discussions would reveal that there was a lack of common understanding between users, or even between decision-makers, of the practical goals that were to be achieved by the building. Beyond a description of a list of spaces to be included in the schools nobody seemed able to describe precisely the way they would operate. In the hospital case it is clear at the end of the design phase that neither the hospital building manager, the hospital engineer, and the nursing manager who are the only members of the hospital involved in all aspects of the architectural design can provide a give a sensible account of the forthcoming medical practice despite the fact that each of them knows that this is supposed to allow a "revolutionary" approach of child care.
- Actually it seems that the joint effort by a group of professors of medicine to define a new model for pediatric care has been suspended during the time of construction, and that economic or ideological motives are given full swing instead.

There is no reason to believe that this "adaptive model" for architectural design fails to take into account all sorts of practical aspects of the future building that are of relevance to some of the stakeholders. But neither can we conclude that it achieves an integration of everyday life and instrumental rationalities. Instead it may either give the designer a false sense of confidence in his ability to capture the authentic needs of users, or expose participants in

the design process to ideological manipulations or even to the same kind of seduction by skillful drawings that the defenders of the artistic model for architectural design uphold. In any case, final outcomes seem to be highly indeterminate.

Unexpected outcomes of adaptive design

There are nevertheless a number of flaws that seem to be recurrent in the school buildings that we have been visiting in suburban Paris. First, one may be struck by the contrast between the general appreciation of the designers' efforts to create buildings that have an aesthetic of their own, and that provide their users with a sense of place, and the importance given to grievances which are stemming from minor aspects of everyday-life, such as children roaming the lobbies too early in the morning, or difficulties with housekeepers, or disputes over the rules to be followed in different spaces by the personnel, by the children, or by their parents. Yet very often they have to do with events that keep repeating themselves and that are viewed as offensive to their view of life-at-school by some people, and which are perfectly acceptable to others.

Besides significant alterations of the buildings are implemented after it has been put into operation. For instance, there are good reasons to design the entrance of the kindergarten close to the entrance of the primary school, and this is to be found in the building plans of a majority of our suburban schools. Yet one discovers that, later on, almost all of their headmasters have switched away one of these entrances so that the two have become very distant from one another. There is always some valid reason for that, such as preventing parents who enter the kindergarten before school-time with their small children to stroll in the primary school, or avoiding too great a crowd when all classes are dismissed at noon, or in mid-afternoon. Libraries are turned into teachers' workroom, pupils' workshops are turned into storage, wardrobes are left unused, large windows giving views onto the neighborhood and allowing the sun to come in are screened off by curtains. There seems to be an endless list of small changes in the expected uses of different rooms which have been brought about by practical reasons that the adaptive design approach was supposed to anticipate. It is even more striking to realize that sometimes the social relationships that were expected to take place in the school have been subjected to a similar process or change. Most of the time people who were supposed to cooperate in common or adjoining spaces have parted company; and, where harmonious relationships were expected, conflicts are observed to surge. In the case of an open school, a very new design approach which was very uncommon in France, the whole space has been partitioned and walled so that the very concept of this design has been altered beyond recognition.

But what is so surprising is that there is no systematic rule to be derived from these observations: each aspect of a design that has been altered because it did not yield satisfactory operations in a school can be found to be quite satisfactory in another one.

Different views of spatial appropriation

One might say that this goes a long way to show that these schools are appropriated by their users, and that this cannot be anticipated by architectural design. But allowing appropriation of space is precisely the aim that was set for architectural design at the end of the sixties when H. Raymond and N. Haumont published their analysis of working class suburban houses[2]. They contrasted vividly the grim life in modern public housing flats in multi-storied buildings designed according to the "rationalist model", and the fine-grained appropriation of space by families in self-built working-class houses. According to their analysis appropriation was a desirable quality of dwelling life that could be achieved only if spatial design of each room and of the house as a whole complied with a set of cultural models of everyday-life which derived from popular culture[3]. Modern flats were alienating, appropriated spaces were affording enfranchisement. This challenge started a great interest for spatial appropriation in France, both among architects and among social scientists[4]. The idea that reproduction of traditional features of house organization is necessary in order to foster appropriation was slightly disturbing to many people. Several pieces of research pointed out to counter examples, it seems clear for instance, from their own declarations, that a number of clients of F. L. Wright had been very surprised by the totally unexpected aspects of spaces in their houses and yet had succeeded in appropriating them[5]. In a similar way F. Lugassy had shown that working class members of the communist party who had been granted the possibility to live in a very uncouth type of building, the Danielle Casanova building by Renaudy, with walls that were making such sharp angles in the bedrooms and living-rooms that traditional furniture had to be discarded, had been able to appropriate their flats; and, that they derived a large satisfaction from their ability to make use of the apparent silliness of the design, after a first shock that had lasted a few weeks when entering them.[6]

Our own observations in the residential neighborhood at boulevard Lobau designed by Sarfati, in Nancy, showed that an approach to design that was not fitting any of the paradigmatic models that we have presented above, had resulted in a small neighborhood were a process of enfranchisement from a previous culture of life in public housing had taken place, allowing for the creation of an entirely unexpected form of group culture which had made possible appropriation of collective spaces which are usually

vandalized in public housing, as well as an appropriation of the private flats despite the fact that they were designed according to "rationalist principles"[7]. We had been fortunate enough to be able to watch this metamorphosis of culture. It came about through the initiative of a small group of inhabitants who started meeting together in the "neighborhood room"[8]. They decided they had a right of property on the common spaces between the small buildings, and that they should not use this right as a group of bourgeois would. They invented another form of property.

A sociological definition of property

Property is a difficult concept. It is widely used to discuss economic purposes so that we tend to think of economic goods as properties. this was a source of great difficulties for most authors who were discussing appropriation, because they had to be careful to disentangle this idea from the idea of economic property[9]. This led to long explanations to the effect that owning a flat did not mean that it was appropriated, and conversely that a rented flat might be appropriated. Thus discussions of appropriation were clearly divorced of any discussion of property.

This was most unfortunate, and probably due to the fact that the french language doesnot make a distinction between ownership and property.

Let us introduce instead the definition proposed by Randall Collins:

> Property is a social relationship, a way in which people act toward things. It is some kind or enforceable agreement as to who can or cannot do what with certain things, and who will back others up in enforcing these actions. It is society, that makes something property, and not some inviolable relationship between one individual and the soil.[10]

Thus property is a right to act upon certain objects which is guaranteed by society, and appropriation is the exercise of this right.

Thus we may very well conceive how this group of inhabitants at Boulevard Lobau were creating a new kind of common property that they would guarantee together, deciding to which uses they would allow these grounds to be put, and whom they would invite to share them. It was rather striking that their approach gave rise to a number of rituals taking place in the common grounds or in the "neighborhood room". Some of them could be described as interaction rituals in the sense given by E. Goffman[11], and others were closer to the idea of a ritual feast, as H. Lefebvre[12] had described them. These rituals eventually gave rise to a strong group solidarity, a sense of a shared identity, a strong attachment to this

residential place, and to a number of collective actions that reflected a sense of generosity for the inhabitants of the surrounding streets which they had agreed to pursue in common.

A general model of social rituals

Randall Collins has proposed to derive from Durkheim a general model of social rituals[13]. He defines a social ritual as a set of ritualized actions which are consummated by a group of people who must be assembled and who share an emblem, that is a symbolic object that focuses the group's idea of itself. The ritualized action may consist of gestures and speech following a given pattern. It is essential that the ritual gives rise to a common dynamic uniting the members of the group in a coherent force, under a given psychological mood. He goes on to show a few general consequences that one may expect from this kind of social interaction:

Members of the group may come to share some ideals to which a sense of common identity becomes attached, as well as specific emotions depending upon the psychological mood under which the ritual takes place. This emotion is diffuse and contagious, and yet its nature evades to a certain degree the understanding by the members, but it may be attached to all sorts of objects which are used as symbols of its own existence by the group. Thus any social ritual may create its own sacred objects, and foster the developments of moral ties between the members of the group in defense of its ideals and of its sacred objects. Each individual may feel stronger for being part of the group, and may be moved to act in defense of its sacred objects or against any violation of them in the name of moral anger. Randall Collins concludes:

> We have, then, an explanation of what holds groups together, and of what keeps them apart. We have an explanation of ideas, and of morality in both its positive and negative aspects. And all of this goes to show the non-rational foundations of rationality.[14]

Interlocking levels of property and appropriation

This theoretical framework which has been used by R. Collins to account for many results of sociology of religion, of crime, and of family provides also a concise account of the somewhat unexpected rise of a sense of identity, that we had been witnessing in Boulevard Lobau, among working class people who seemed to be afflicted by learned powerlessness.

Since at the time of our observations we were entertaining a purely psychological theory of appropriation we had been expecting appropriation of the flats to precede any appropriation of the neighborhood. And actually we did not even supposed that such an appropriation of common space would be likely to occur in public

housing in Nancy. We were taken aback when we watched the development of appropriation of the common grounds by the inhabitants at a time when they would rather complain that their flats did not fit them. And even more surprised to observe a few weeks later that once they had decided that they might swap flats, each family decided that its own flat was the best choice, and started subsequently to give signs of its appropriation. Even though architecture had been the same from the beginning, its impact upon the inhabitants seemed to be changing over time.

The explanation is rather simple: these inhabitants were coming from public housing and they shared a culture of mutual distrust with their neighbors. They felt certain that any public housing was alike, as well as all the flats of the same size, despite superficial differences of the facades. This residential area did not conform to this model. Buildings were different, they had very different views on the surroundings, and almost all the flats were different from one another. But the most striking difference was the existence of private gardens and common grounds with a few amenities for enjoying them privately or as a group. These grounds became the very first meeting place, and the oddities of the situation and of the architectural decoration of the facades provided fuel for informal conversations. These rituals of interaction gave rise to a small group of people who felt stronger for being envied by visitors who were flocking to this place because of its colorful architecture. They felt privileged by society and they developed an ideal of repayment to the benefit of other working-class people living all around. They gathered together all the inhabitants in ritualized meetings and they made the buildings themselves into a symbol of the group, christening this residence "the village Lobau". This group had created its own property, and it was acknowledged as legitimate by the head of the housing company and by the mayor of the city whom they invited at a celebration they had organized. This made further interaction between the inhabitants possible and they started visiting one another's flats which led to the discovery that they were different. Then they considered the possibility of starting an exchange. But each of them decided to choose to remain living where he was. Being members of this self-appointed group had given these inhabitants a freedom that enabled them to make their flats into their own property. Actually becoming members of a group had not made each of them more dependent of the "community". But to the contrary, developing a sense of a good life to be pursued in common had freed them from the culture of mutual distrust that was alienating each of them from all others at the time of their arrival. It allowed each of them to develop a sense of individual difference, and as a consequence attachment to their flats became very strong.

Architectural design as a support for change

So far we have seen that appropriation of space depended upon rituals of property taking place among the inhabitants or users of a building. Such rituals may concern only small groups in a building, a family or a teacher and her class for instance, or they may concern all the users of the building. Hence there are several levels of appropriation. We have also suggested that the higher level of appropriation might be conducive to lower levels (community appropriation may be conducive to family appropriation), whilst nothing allows to expect private appropriation to give rise to collective appropriation. All of this was predicated upon a few distinctive features of this particular residence. We have suggested that, knowingly or not, this architect had introduced a set of design features that were experienced by the users has clear signs of attention for their well-being. We have also noted that beyond this recognition of meaningful intentions some aesthetical aspects of the building were strikingly beyond interpretation. And lastly we have shown how rituals that developed in this residence had allowed the enfranchisement of these inhabitants from an alienating culture of public housing. Architecture seems to be a possible ingredient for cultural change!

Then why is this kind of observation so rare? Why don't we see cultural changes taking place in all these buildings that have been prepared by ritualized encounters between the architect and some future users? Did they lack a common symbol? Obviously the building itself should be seen by each of these groups as a symbol of the group and of its shared ideals. Actually anybody who has taken part in one of these working groups has felt the grip of the building up – of a common identity, of the shared emotions, and of the sense of moral righteousness that develops as work progresses. All of this confirms the general model of social rituals proposed by R. Collins. But then why does it fail later?

Simply, as one would expect from the theory, because after the programming or the planning is finished the groups never meet again. Collective energy wanes out, and the sense of common identity and mutual support vanishes away. The groups disband quietly during the building process. Several members go away, and only a few participants enter the finished building. Then life starts as anywhere, gone are the ritual meetings. There are exceptions of course, because work-life may give rise to social rituals enabling a group to develop a sense of identity. But it is a matter of chance that the architect might have designed features which can be interpreted by this particular group as intended for them as a group, so that the building itself may stand as a symbol for the group.

Of course it could be the case if there were some relation between the groups which have been engaged in the rituals of pro-

gramming or in rituals of design reviewing, and the working groups that are bound to meet according to social rituals when the building is in operation. Some of our findings seem to support this hypothesis. People, such as school headmasters who have been part of a design process and who use to engage in rituals of interaction with their colleagues are likely to transmit some sense of the ideals that developed when preparing the project[15]. As it might be expected from the general model of social rituals, they do not transmit only an appreciation of the building itself, but rather a shared ideal for the organization itself, and emotional attachment to some features of the building which are commonly perceived as symbols for the organization. We might call this a positive finding. But there are a number of aspects the absence of which confirms the model in a negative sense, and which are much easier to observe. Those members who belong to social categories which are never invited to take part in the design process, such as house keepers in primary schools, are usually not invited either to take part in social rituals of the work-life with the others, and they never develop a sense of identity with fellow employees of the place; to the contrary they experience a great sense of social distance. But the same is true for several professional groups in the schools or in a hospital. Despite all its pretense to Albertinian unity the building fail to provide a common symbol supporting a shared sense of identity that might help reach for compromise at times of conflict. Usually architects pay no attention to these menial problems of social encounters in a work environment unless it is made compulsory by some rules. And the division of labor precludes informal encounters from happening. Chances of a development of interaction practices that might lead to rituals embracing all the members of the organization are forfeited right from the start. Henceforth it is not surprising to observe so many conflicts between members of different occupational strata in public organizations, despite their common willingness to contribute to the public interest. One should simply remember that social bonds depend on social rituals rather than on shared ideas or intentions.

But there is more that can be derived from this theoretical interpretation: when a group of new teachers entering a school decides to start any kind of social ritual, such as taking a cup of coffee together at recess, or preparing activities in the multi-purpose room in the school every week, a group identity may develop, and some ideals are bound to appear, but if the design thwarts these activities, because the lobbies are so noisy that it is impossible to have a quiet time together at recess for instance, the building is not likely to become a symbol of the group. Symbolically it falls apart.

Developing a sense of the common good within an organization

One would expect schools or hospitals to be places where everybody shares a sense of the common good that is geared to the accomplishment of public service to the children or to patients. Yet this is not so because of latent conflicts along social status and professional lines. And one may wonder why a sense of the common good should be attained even if the architectural design afforded all the employees to engage in some rituals of interaction, because of the strength of these latent conflicts. It seems reasonable to assume that, in any case, this is not a question that would call upon the resources of architectural design. We shall briefly describe conditions under which a commonly accepted practical morality may develop in a group, and then suggest nevertheless why adaptive architecture may support this process, and yet usually fails to do so.

A comparative research on cooperative housing in Canada, Bofaelleskaber in Denmark, and in the "lilla kollektivhuset" in Sweden[16] suggests that groups of inhabitants who share ritual practices in daily life which support a continuous process of mutual interpellation of one another's public behavior will develop a sense of shared identity, will refer to their residential neighborhood or some of its architectural features as a symbol of their group, will share emotions with their neighbors, as well as capacities for mutual support, and will elaborate common moral views for practical life (norms and values that construct a valid description of the common good).

Such results could be expected according to the general model of social rituals provided the groups ideal was the achievement of the common good, and the building on the site provided a symbol for the group. This had actually been initiated in each case thanks to some kind of adaptive architectural design. In most of these residential sites a group of families had met together more or less haphazardly before the architectural design had started, they had devised together a set of rules for neighborly and collective life, and they had reviewed proposed design with the architect. All of this had been achieved through ritualized meetings where everybody had a voice, and defended his view of the good life. This had made the design into a symbol of the ideal view of itself that the group entertained, and the idea of the common good into its ideal. Hence the model of social rituals applies.

To a certain extent these are success stories for adaptive architectural design; and yet one must stress that the idea of the common good these people had achieved before entering the built place had to be reconsidered afterwards on a more or less continuous basis. Even though a great effort at communicative action was achieved during the design process and had led to common

agreement it did not prove sufficient to guide all anticipated social interactions later on. This invites reconsidering the idea of communicative action:

> I speak of communicative action, writes Habermas, when social interactions are coordinated not through the egocentric calculations of success of every individual, but through cooperative achievements of understanding amongst participants. In communicative action, participants are not oriented primarily to their own success but to the realization of an agreement which is a condition under which all participants in the interaction may pursue their own plans[17].

He further distinguishes between instrumental, strategy and communicative action. Judith Allen has shown recently that communicative action did help developing "politics of resistance" in London's Community Areas[18]. In our case it can be seen that the groups of residents, in their efforts at communicative action during the design process, believed they had achieved a blueprint for a good residential life. Yet such rational decision-making was not necessarily binding, because any formal statement can be understood differently by two persons according to their culture or to their previous life-experience, and it is always possible to claim later that there had been a misunderstanding. Actually very much like the London groups, they achieved commitment to a joint effort towards a better life. Communicative action embedded in socially ritualized activities in the residential area provides both the social bonds and the drive towards a definition of the common good.

But for this to happen, a few conditions must be fulfilled: all members of the group should feel free to take a stand in discussion, should feel equals to one another, and moreover they should share a will for morality. We have seen how ritualized discussions of the common good during the design process did help fulfill the last condition. But this is not true for all adaptive design practice because most of it calls either for instrumental or for strategic action on the part of stakeholders rather than for communicative action. As we have noted earlier, the design team for the children's hospital had renounced any effort to anticipate the life-world and the rules defining a common good in the new pediatric ward. Instead they concentrated on solving technical problems or negotiating compromises between competing demands. Thus, ritualized encounters may yield a shared enthusiasm for some ideal of a technical or ideological nature, rather than of a moral nature. In such a case the design process does not provide the initial conditions for the future development of ritualized communicative action. It may nevertheless be of some consequence: when a few users have been part

of the development of an ideal during the design period or during the construction period, so that actual parts of the building may stand as symbols for their ideal, they may recreate similar rituals with newcomers once the building is finished and carry-on this ideal. But this is a rare event because it calls for the power to recreate the ritual: a school headmaster may, a parent cannot. And it must be noted besides that such ideal view of the place may become too rigid if new users share somewhat different expectations with respect to collective life there, because nothing pressures them into searching for mutual understanding. And yet it is only the collective endeavor for a constant updating of shared views of the good life that may enable a group to solve practical problems arising from technical circumstances or from differences of interest.

Further problems: responsiveness and accountability

In summary, most methods used in adaptive design are predicated upon a confrontation of competing demands expressed by different stakeholders and confronted to technical demands upheld by experts, in the name of some common utopian or ideological view of the organization to be achieved. It may provide a frustrating or a thrilling experience, but this is entirely different from any kind of communicative action. And it does not pave the way for the building to be accepted as a symbol of a will to reach a sense of the common good. This may account for the poor fit of buildings designed this way to expectations raised by actual users in daily life, but there are a few more problems that should also be kept in mind.

First, a number of stakeholders are usually neglected, or silenced because of their lower status: people in charge of housekeeping, gardening, goods delivery, refuse collection, or maintenance for instance. A few other stakeholders are difficult to call upon for a design exercise: school-children, hospital patients, visitors under stress because a family member undergoes surgery... And yet it is clear that the building should be responsive to their needs and to their plights.

Second, decision-makers should be accountable for the investment in public buildings. Adaptive design is supposed to help them make sensible decisions, but it may as well blur the reasons behind choices and the broader influences at play. A large consultation of stakeholders may hide from public scrutiny power games which are shaping final outcomes. It is fascinating in this respect to observe that after two decades of adaptive architecture so little experience has filtered out, so that similar mistakes are repeated one building after the other, and that we have no record of the public's view of any given building in order to help organizations become more accountable to demands from the citizens.

Conclusion

Architectural design is a highly specialized kind of planning. Yet it would seem to be rather simple when compared to the huge uncertainties that have to be met by social or economic planning. It is nevertheless difficult to override the limits of the adaptive practice that has become the stock of the trade of architectural programming, because this practice reaches for consensus between stakeholders about the action to be enacted (and about the building to be built). But efforts for such "democratic consultation" of stakeholders, leading to a search for compromise between competing "social demands" are misconstrued. They put the emphasis on strategic or instrumental rationality, and when they give rise to ritualized interaction between future users it enables them at best to develop a technical or an ideological ideal of the place. Instead we may observe that when the rituals of planning consultation lead to discussions of the common good to be achieved, they lay the foundation of a common will to morality despite the fact that rational discussions do not succeed in reaching a stable definition of the common good. This shows that architectural planning may contribute to sustainable social development predicated upon communicative action, but it goes against the foundation of communicative action in linguistic competence and transcendental pragmatics. It suggests that we might look into social rituals instead.

In a very general sense architectural planning cannot be seen as a technical activity because it deals with the foundation of social bonds and of common ideals in society. It is part of the life-world, and it is not some technical action that would lay its material conditions. It takes a part in the recreation of the sacred in godless societies.

Notes

1. Lefebvre, Henri (1968), *La vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne.* NRF Idées. Paris Chap II La société bureaucratique de consommation dirigée.
2. Raymond, M. G. & H, Haumont, A & N (1966), *Les pavillonnaires.* Institut de sociologie urbaine. Edition du CRU. Ministère de l'Equipement. Paris.
   Haumont, Nicole (1966), *Les pavillonnaires.* Institut de sociologie urbaine. Edition du CRU. Ministére de l'Equipement. Paris.
   Raymond, Marie Geneviève (1966), *La politique pavillonnaire.* Institut de sociologie urbaine. Edition du CRU. Ministére de l'Equipement. Paris.
3. Haumont, Nicole (1976), "Les pratiques d'appropriation du logement". In Korosec, Serfaty (ed.), AP 76 *Proceedings of the 3rd*

international architectural psychology conference at Strasbourg University.

4. Korosec-Serfaty, Perla (ed.), "Appropriation of Space". AP 76 *Proceedings of the 3rd international architectural psychology conference at Strasbourg University.* This very thick volume comprises nearly 60 communications on appropriation of space. See Peter Stringer, "Une theorie de la participation et de relations pour la psychologie de l'architecture", p. 135–144.
5. Conan, Michel (1988), *Frank Lloyd Wright et ses clients.* Essai sur la demande adressée par des familles aux architectes. Plan Construction et Architecture. Collection Recherches. Ministère de l'Equipement. Paris.
6. Lugassy, F. (1973), *Les reactions à l'immeuble Danielle Casanova à Ivry. CEP 12 Rue Alfred de Vigny*, Paris.
7. Conan, Michel, Salignon, Bernard (1987), *Composer les différences.* Les logements du Boulevard Lobau à Nancy. Plan Construction. Ministére de l'Equipement. Paris.
8. Each public housing building must provide to its inhabitants a "neighborhood room" which can be used for any kind of group activity amongst them.
9. Chauchard, P. (1956), *Sociétés animales et Société humaine.* PUF; Paris. "La propriété d'un territoire n'est pas un phénomène social et tous les solitaires ont leur logis qu'ils défendent d'abord par les marques de la possession et éventuellement par le combat..." This text is quoted by N. Haumont (*Les Pavillonnaires*, p. 55 op. cit.). She goes on to explain that the reference to the idea of property is quite useless in order to account for elementary aspects of "appropriation". Paul Henry Chombart de Lauwe takes a cautious attitude, stating that a study of "psychological appropriation" processes cannot be divorced from the study of "socio-economic appropriation" in processes; p. 26 in Korosec, Serfaty (ed.), AP 76 *Proceedings of the 3rd international architectural psychology conference at Strasbourg University.* And Roger Henri Guerrand takes a very different view stating that from a historical point of view the two concepts of "Property" and "Appropriation", when applied to housing, are born from social changes originating with the french revolution. Ibid. pp. 236–240.
10. Collins, Randall (1992), *Sociological Insight. An introduction to non-obvious sociology.* Oxford University Press. Page 122.
11. Goffman,Erving (1967), *Interaction Ritual, Essays on face to face behavior.* Pantheon books. New York.
12. Lefebvre, Henri (1968), *La vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne.* Collection Idées NRF. Paris. Cf p. 73.
13. Durkheim, Emile (1912), *Les formes elementaires de la vie reli-*

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14. Collins, Randall (1992), *Sociological Insight.* Chapter 2 The Sociology of God.
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