Towards an Architecture of *Dissensus*: Participatory Urbanism in South-East Asia

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Introduction

This paper offers a novel series of reflections on the relationship between design and politics in the context of participatory practices, slum upgrading and wider participatory urbanisms. It critically discusses the specific material and political conditions of a South-East Asian case of slum upgrading, which aims at an 'alternative development process in which the people […] are at the centre of a process of transforming their lives, settlements and position in the city'.[1] The paper draws on Jacques Rancière's work, in particular his principles of equality, his conception of the *partition of the sensible* and his reflections on the *politics of aesthetics* as an intellectual reference for an interrogation of the aesthetic regimes and spatial coordinates that have animated the debate about urban poverty eradication, slum upgrading and participatory design. The empirical material observed in South-East Asia does not touch simplistically on the discourse of sustainability,[2] upgrading and informality, but instead it offers readers an unapologetically political reflection, in that it lives up to a call for perpetual democratisation in which active citizens – who commit to managing themselves and their spaces autonomously – are continuously struggling to become active and participate in the city.[3]

The reasons for adopting Rancière's work as an intellectual toolbox for this exercise in thinking about the political potential of design and participatory urbanism are multiple, and can be found in his material, sensorial and concrete formulation of politics and political emancipation, which illuminates opportunities for the act of design to either reforge connections or further disintegrate architecture with its political and social function. Part of a 'new French generation' of contemporary thinkers, such as Jean-Luc Nancy, Bernard Stiegler, Catherine Malabou and Alain Badiou, Rancière has turned from language to materiality as his core concern. This is particularly useful in our attempt to approach egalitarian political practice in the urban reality since he addresses the mechanisms through which the domain of sensual experience is parcelled out: a division which serves to maintain a perceived separation of capacities regarding who can and who cannot legitimately speak. Here, politics becomes a matter of individuals contesting their subordinate position through an act of disrupting the division of sensible experience. This triad relationship of (in)equality, politics, and sensible experience is why Rancière's work is so relevant to this essay, which aims to explore the way in which design and architecture can become relevant to egalitarian politics.

Central to such discussion is what authors like Žižek and Mouffe define as post-democratic or post-political; in other words, the current political condition in which the spaces of public reflection are voided of dispute and disagreement[4] and replaced instead by a consensually established frame within which participation serves to uphold an image of democracy.[5] What is discussed on the political agenda in the post-political condition is pre-ordained on the basis of unquestioned and unquestionable axioms

concerning social relationships, how the economy should be organised or a city built. By governing the boundaries of what is – and what is not – the subject of debate from the outset, participation functions to demonstrate 'that the people are part of the political process'.[6] Here, however, the scope of politics, opposed to negotiating conflict, is reduced to identifying consensus within a given, and mostly economically determined, frame.[7] Although such a shallow form of (usually localised) participation can address the manifestation of local 'wrongs', it hardly challenges root causes.[8] While we adopt this post-political approach, the argument at hand is that participation can take a multiplicity of forms, from pacifying critique to politicising action. In the case of Baan Mankong and the Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA), we see a paradigmatic case of participatory urbanism transgressing consensus politics. Though not entirely free of pacifying elements, the programmes are located to an exceptional degree on the politicising side.

This paradigm is not limited to the debate over participation and politics but has also entered architectural discourse under the disguise of a suspicious 'discontent' with criticality,[9] abandoning the project of radical critique as a blanket negation of the political;[10] moreover, it has also entered the urban discourse in a broader reflection on democracy and inclusion.[11] However, as architecture is slowly re-engaging in a new critical project that allows the political and social natures of the practice to be reclaimed, it is crucial to expand such rediscovery to include the inherently political nature of space, which is – contrary to the dominant discourse on participation, which treats it as fundamentally consensual and homogenises differences – necessarily produced in contestation and dissensus.

When applied to the current debate on urban and architectural design, this essay fits into a renewed reflection on the expansion of architectural disciplinary boundaries,[12] which deliberately contests the overt pragmatism and rigidity of the discipline in the form of the so-called autonomous project.[13] While a discussion of the concept of autonomy exceeds the scope of this article, an understanding of architecture as non-autonomous and, as Fischer presents it,[14] existing in contiguity with society and culture as a reflection of societal conditions, is a precondition for utilising Ranciere's *spatiality of equality*. Echoing a call from the current debate on participatory urbanism[15] – whether in its form of Do-It-Yourself[16] urban activism[17] or seen as the struggle over democracy and the right to the city[18] – we understand architecture not merely as form or object, but as a complex and contingent condition that both enables and constrains thinking and actions; a gesture that involves both reflective and projective modes, contemplating critique and active intervention. Importantly, by understanding design as an act, it immediately becomes politically charged because it is actively seeking out uncharted areas, and new horizons and modalities of sensory experiences.[19]

Acknowledging the recent shift in the debate on design practice toward ethical considerations, the deliberate choice of using and developing Rancière's *spatiality of equality* aims to highlight the political dimension of design and architecture, which to date has not been sufficiently elaborated,[20] and also to elucidate how questions regarding the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics can be framed, with reference to what Rancière called *le partage du sensible*. This concept describes the many procedures by which forms of experience – broadly understood as the domains of what can be thought, said, felt or perceived – are divided up and shared among legitimate and illegitimate persons and forms of activity. Similarly, aesthetics is defined as 'a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise',[21] while politics is seen as never static and pure but instead characterised by division, conflict and polemics that allow the invention of the new, the unauthorised and the disordered. In this light, artistic practices

(thus including architecture and space) are forms of visibility that can themselves serve as interruptions of the given partition of the sensible. For this reason, work on aesthetics is work on politics since it embraces a set of exclusions, a set of items that are not simply unsaid, unseen and unheard as such, but instead withdrawn from appearing because they are implicitly deemed unworthy or not entitled to appear. Rancière's theorisation is relevant here because it allows for a material, sensorial and concrete formulation of politics, political participation and emancipation. Even though Rancière did not discuss architecture per se, he was greatly inspired by Aristotle's and Plato's reflection on the *polis* and its central reference to a political space as a reconfiguration 'where parties, parts, or lack of parts have been defined.' His claim that '[p]olitical activity […] makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise'[22] remains heavily illustrative for architecture and urban design. Moreover, by illustrating a *spatiality of equality*, we show that Rancière's basic assumption, the equality of intelligence, (borrowing Hallward's summary 'everyone thinks, everyone speaks […], but the prevailing division of labour and configuration of society ensures that only certain classes of people are *authorized* to think')[23] is pertinently enlightening in the debate over participation on a wider urban scale and in the struggle for democracy. Together, these two dimensions of Rancière's work make him an indispensable reference in the discussion of participatory urbanism, which is why we have employed it as the theoretical backdrop that guides our search for a more socially just design practice. To use Rancière's words:

> [M]y concern with 'space' is the same as my concern with 'aesthetics'. [...] My work on politics was an attempt to show politics as an 'aesthetic affair'. What I mean by this term has nothing to do with the 'aestheticization of politics' that Benjamin opposed to the 'politicization of art'. What I mean is that politics, rather than the exercise of power or the struggle for power, is the configuration of a specific world, a specific form of experience in which some things appear to be political objects, some questions political issues or argumentations and some agents political subjects.[24]

Consequently, choosing the case study Baan Mankong and Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA), comes very naturally. For Rancière, political struggle occurs when the excluded seek to establish their identity by speaking for themselves and striving to get their voices heard and recognised as legitimate, thus disrupting the specific horizon and modalities of sensory experience. A struggle of this kind is evident in some of the marginalised communities in Bangkok and other South-East Asian cities, which have leveraged collective resources as bargaining power to claim politically legitimate participation in their development. The case of Baan Mankong/ACCA is truly novel; it approximates Rancière's idea of equality because the group locates the agency of change with the excluded, thus enacting a fundamental break with conventional participatory development practice.[25] In addition, the programmes are experimenting with a novel and potentially radical version of an older architectural concept: community architecture, which is crucially reforming the role of the design practitioner, and therefore provides the ideal empirical reality from which we can attempt to elucidate the critical relationship between the *presupposition of equality* and design, and therefore between participatory urbanism and the politics of recognition.

Rancière's ontology and dissensus

Rancière's fundamental political concern is the denial of recognition experienced by the dominated. Rancière criticised structuralist Marxists for upholding the elitist intellectual superiority of the philosopher over the worker instead of arguing for the need not to interpret, but to listen to the voice of the excluded as equals.[26] Rejecting the

Habermasian liberal idea that politics consists of a rational debate between diverse interests, and the Arendtian idea of a specific political sphere and political way of life, in the 1980s Rancière defined what constitutes the essential aspect of politics: the affirmation of the principle of equality of speech for people who are supposed to be equal but not treated as such by the established police order of the democratic community.[27] For Rancière, 'proper' order will always be interrupted by impropriety, and this notion, despite being focused on critical writing and 'literality', served to set the stage for his provocative conception of politics, and his constant and insistent defence of democracy as *dissensus,* as scandalous.[28] Rancière's innovative thoughts can be understood as a redefinition or recalibration of politics, grounded in those of Arendt and Foucault. Although the limited space available here and the thrust of this essay do not allow for further reflections on the legacy of the Arendtian and Foucaultian projects,[29] it should be acknowledged that Rancière's analysis of the *police* relies on Foucault's definition of power as 'a complex strategic situation in a given society' and his work on governmentality.[30] Here Rancière refers not to the 'petty police' and simple system of domination or inequality, but to 'an order of bodies'[31] making the police a particular '(ac)counting of the community'.[32] In maintaining the possibility of emancipation and a partitioning of such positioning in space, Rancière builds his new, some say utopian,[33] notion of politics upon Foucault's critical reflection on modern power.[34]

What is important for Rancière, and for our argument, is not to overlook the fact that an explicit focus on the excluded, on the part that does not fit in or participate, implies an assumption about the whole, which could be considered the norm: a meaningful and peculiar idea of society and its representation as a symbolic whole.[35] Rancière called this *police,* not referring to repressive forces but rather to the order of things, to the order of the *polis*, and therefore to the established social order within a process of governing. Since the *demos* is included by nature in the *polis*, the political problem is drastically reduced to assigning individuals their place/position through the administration of conflicts between different parties by a government founded on juridical and technical competences.[36] In other words, a 'society is […] divided into functions, into places where these functions are exercised, into groups which are, by virtue of their places, bound for exercising this or that function'.[37] In contrast, *politics* in its very essence is constituted by disagreement/*dissensus*, by disruptions of the police order through the dispute over the common space of the polis and the common use of language.

To name a phenomenon and assign it its 'proper' place is to establish order – thereby an act of depoliticisation.[38] This is exactly the detrimental but interesting use of Rancière's thought in the debate over urban poverty, marginalisation and participatory practices. Slums, marginal areas, low-income communities, barrios and so forth are included in the police order by their exclusion. Their territories, their histories and their societal features, although neither homogeneous nor reducible to the same categories, legitimise – participatory – interventions. Such co-option of the participatory process to merely replicate and strengthen the established order is made easier through the marginal communities that significantly differ from formal areas of the city. In Rancière's approach, this is not a question of politics but of alterations in a police order. *The inclusion of the excluded*, which somehow epitomised the mantra of the participation debate, is the wrong way of thinking politically about the issue, for even exclusion from formal power is a form of inclusion in the police order, (for example, women and slaves in the Greek *polis*). Politics, therefore, is not about identifying the 'excluded' and trying to 'include' them. The logic of identification belongs to

the police. Politics proper is to question the 'given' order of the police that seems to be the natural order of things, to question the whole and its partitioned spaces, and to verify the equality of any speaking being to any other speaking being.

The notion of inclusion, central to the debate on participation, is rendered as working from the inside-out, emanating from the position of those who are already considered to be democratic, which reveals the underlying assumption that democracy can and should become a de facto political reality. As such, we begin to see this trajectory as the construction of a particular police order, becoming a teleological trajectory toward an already known end-state in which inclusion becomes an entirely numerical operation. In contrast:

> a political moment would not merely entail the inclusion of excluded groups, but rather an inclusion that, through such including, reconfigures the landscape in such ways as to change the conditions under which arguments can be understood, speakers can be acknowledged, claims can be made, and rights can be exercised.[39]

As such, a more democratic production of housing and cities appears to be a practical test of the assumption of equality between any and every speaking being. For Rancière, equality is not an end-state but a starting point that requires constant verification in an open, experimental and non-teleological logic that operates from the outside-in. If the *police* is a set of implicit rules and conventions which determine the distribution of roles in a community and the forms of exclusion which operate within it, then genuine political acts do not simply reorder relations of power (a different order, but an order per se) but disrupt this order, tearing bodies from their assigned places. This happens when 'the traditional mechanisms of what are usually called politics are put into question'.[40] This is *dissensus,* since it introduces new subjects and heterogeneous objects into

the fields of *perception*.

One of Rancière's most suggestive and fruitful concepts is *le partage du sensible*. It refers to the way in which roles and modes of participation in a social world are determined by establishing possible modes of perception. The partition of the sensible sets the divisions between what is visible and invisible, speakable and unspeakable – in Rancière's words, audible and inaudible. As Rancière explains, such a partition is the system of a priori forms determining what will present itself to sense experience. It is a 'delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience'.[41] Such a definition is useful to our discourse since distribution implies both inclusion and exclusion in a sensorial manner. 'Sensible' is therefore both that which can be perceived by the senses and that which 'makes sense to think or to do'.[42] In this sense:

> Political activity is always a mode of expression that undoes the perceptible divisions of the police order by implementing a basically heterogeneous assumption, that of a part of those who have no part, an assumption that, at the end of the day, itself demonstrates the sheer contingency of the other, the equality of any other speaking being.[43]

Equally important for a theorisation of the relation between political struggle and design is Rancière's work on *aesthetics*, which he has focused on increasingly since the early 1990s. He has written a series of works on film and literature in which he stresses the political dimension of aesthetics, and a number of works of political theory in which he argues that an aesthetic dimension is inherent in politics. Just as the concept of the partition of the sensible serves to draw together Rancière's political-philosophical apparatus, so it also acts as the lynchpin of his interest in aesthetics when he states that 'aesthetics is at the core of politics',[44]

especially as aesthetics for him is another name for the partition of the sensible. For him, artistic practices (despite his direct reference to literature, film and fine art, we can extend it to architecture) are forms of visibility that can themselves serve as interruptions of the given partition of the sensible. Therefore, work on aesthetics is work on politics. The sensible is a field over which political agreements and disagreements occur; it is where power is held and lost. As such, speaking of the distribution of the sensible is Rancière's way of speaking about the material conditions of political life in their epistemic and communicative salience.[45] Central to this is the *process* of becoming a political subject, in which those who have no recognised part in the social order, who are invisible or inaudible in political terms, assert their egalitarian claim – a collective claim to exist as political subjects. Such a process has three different dimensions. First, it is an *argumentative demonstration*; second, it is a *heterologic disidentification*; and third, and most relevant to this paper, it is a *theatrical and spectacular dramatisation*. Space is crucial to this since it becomes the creative and dramatic stage for visibility. This process is *theatrocratic* because it is creative and constructive and involves not only the manifestation of a new subject but also the construction of common space or *scenes* of relationality, which did not previously exist.[46] Thus, this dimension of theatrical dramatisation goes beyond the single perception of visibility/audibility in that it constructs new ways in which parts of society relate to each other, and reconfigures the way in which subjects are heard and seen. 'Space […] becomes an integral element of the interruption of the "natural" (or, better yet, naturalized) order of domination through the constitution of a place of encounter by those that have no part in that order'.[47] Here, design becomes relevant, as this conception of politics ascribes to design the potential of instigating 'the invention of sensible forms and material structures for a life to come'.[48] Aesthetics rethought as the invention of new forms of life – as a critical break

with common sense – opens up possibilities for new commonalities of sense. In order for the sensible to be extricated from its usual circuits of meaning and significance, changing from and *disagreeing* with the typical operation of identifying, classifying and organising need to happen. Works of art are thus the material mechanisms through which 'the mind can suspend its own constitutive function, thereby allowing the sensible object to be emancipated from the implicit police order of the modern age'.[49] The emergence of such an event takes shape as a disagreement because it becomes necessary to think *ex novo* about the rules of a judgement 'in order to reconfigure the identities, relations, and arrangements through which positions and arguments make sense'.[50]

The above theoretical artillery, although sketched and partial, is illuminating when examining the Baan Mankong/ACCA case and the ways in which it promotes the creation of new commonalities of sense in the name of equality, including the role of design, since it allows us to rethink how architecture and design are used and to consider the aesthetic dimensions of our social world in a political way.

Baan Mankong and the Asian Coalition for Community Action

Part of the network of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), Thailand's Baan Mankong Collective Housing Programme, aims to create the conditions for the people who have previously been excluded from secure housing to take the lead in the process of providing their own secure housing, and thus it shifts the emphasis from a supply-driven to a demand-driven housing development, based on the experience that neither the private nor the public sector has proven capable of meeting the need for housing in an affordable way. It is premised that the people in need have a massive potential force for taking their housing into their own hands since they have demonstrated this in the past by constructing their houses informally.[51] Contrary to the last

decades, however, this time they are supported to acquire secure tenure through technical and, more importantly, financial assistance from the state (in the form of an accessible loan), which enables them to negotiate for land and services on their own behalf with the backup of a national government programme. With the core objective of addressing the societal misrepresentation of the urban poor as helpless and untrustworthy, this programme reframes the question of poverty alleviation from 'how to *train* the urban poor or *change* their behaviour […] to *identify* how development interventions can nurture and develop the strength that already exists, letting people make change'.[52]

Baan Mankong has emerged from a decade-long experience of community savings, upgrading, and networking in the face of evictions in Thailand. In addition, it has benefitted from and contributed to a long learning trajectory in Asia through ACHR, which has been running a programme called ACCA (Asian Coalition for Community Action) since 2009 that shares the principles of Baan Mankong. These two programmes should be seen as a cross-regional mobilisation, which 'is trying to unlock that force at scale, opening up new space, new collaborations and new possibilities that are beginning to resolve these problems'.[53] Nevertheless, Baan Mankong is unique in that the institution that directly coordinates and promotes it, the Community Organisations Development Institute (CODI), is 'a well financed, national institution with an official policy mandate to secure land tenure for the urban poor'.[54] While building on its predecessor's work (Urban Communities Development Office), this historical precedent of high investment into the scaling-up and institutionalisation of such a people-centred process to national relevance can be contextualised to a change in public opinion during the last decades towards self-sufficiency and greater participation by civil society.[55] Intensified by the financial crisis of 1997, part of this greater change was the founding of CODI as an independent public organisation in

2000. After the election of a populist government in 2001, Baan Mankong was announced in 2003, with a target of creating 300,000 houses as part of a one million home scheme for low-income households.[56] By 2011, Baan Mankong had involved 90,813 households in 1546 communities (CODI website, 2011). Even though initially less resourced, by January 2013 ACCA had managed to gather 274,000 savers with collective savings totalling US\$ 22.5 million, and had reached 165 cities/districts in nineteen countries through 1,185 approved small upgrading projects, each costing US\$ 3000, and 111 large housing projects, each worth US\$ 40,000. The ACCA budget itself constitutes only six per cent of the total project values, with US\$ 75.7 million of land, infrastructure and cash leveraged from governments.[57]

The working principles of demand-driven housing development in Baan Mankong

The basis on which a community forms can vary from a group of people living in the same informal settlement who want to upgrade collectively, to a collection of people from the same area looking for new land to purchase. It may also happen that extended family members join a group. This is the moment when the notion of *community* becomes relevant to the housing programme. In this region, *community* is normally an administrative term; however, while keeping the administrative connotation that refers to a territorially connected settlement, the meaning of *community* here takes on a second dimension, namely that of denoting a social relationship that includes working together toward a shared aim. A central premise behind the programme is that practical motives can give rise to a community that is defined by solidarity and reciprocity. This assumption is closely related to one of the cornerstones of the programme's emancipatory potential: improving the financial capacity of a group and recognising it as a financial agent. A central mechanism geared toward this objective is the establishment of savings groups and a financial

organisation. A group of individuals can only apply to the programme and become a Baan Mankong community once they have begun to save collectively. Although a minimum of organisational support is given from the start, the group can only receive a collective loan once they have saved ten per cent of the total amount. The loan can be used for the acquisition of collective tenure – whether through land purchase or lease – or for house building or upgrading purposes. In addition, each community receives a grant for infrastructure. The loan system works as a revolving fund, which means that repayments can be lent on to other communities; this makes the system emancipatory rather than remaining simply instrumental. '[G]roups that can demonstrate the ability to accumulate finance can also claim the right to be recognized. Such recognition is important in multiple ways […] it increases the likelihood of tenure recognition and access to services, and it results in political inclusion as the state is more interested in making deals with those holding financial resources'.[58]

With regard to land, it is important to note that each community has to negotiate for land itself. In Bangkok, the vast majority of slums are informal structures erected without observing architectural or planning standards and regulations, on land rented from a third-party owner of which 'a significant portion […] approximately 47%, […] is owned by the national government'.[59] Different types of landowners pose different challenges, and any negotiation is usually based on an initial citywide, and in Bangkok, district-wide survey, to collect critical household and land information and identify stakeholders. This action usually involves local authority agents and functions as the first official recognition of the slum dwellers, which in turn stimulates their own networking and understanding of shared problems and their place in the city: 'Poverty isolates, geographically and socially […]. The survey is the first step in developing a larger and more structural understanding of the city and the various problems faced by the urban poor'.[60] The theatrical manifestation of the peoples' emancipatory potential through city-wide action remains central, connecting Baan Mankong participants with many different kinds of actors, such as the local authorities, service deliverers, landowners, as well as NGOs and academia. 'Instead of the city being a vertical unit of control, these smaller units – people-based and local – can be a system of self-control for a more creative, more meaningful development'.[61]

The city-wide survey is also the first step in which communities are supported by *community architects*, a movement that started in Thailand and then expanded throughout South-East Asia, becoming even more central in the ACCA programme. Their presence expresses the paramount role of design in Baan Mankong. This movement guides communities through the critical spatial components of the process of collectively negotiating secure tenure and eventually building homes that are tailored to the needs and aspirations of each, unique community. By not requiring specific physical outputs, the programme allows community organisations to take the lead in their own development. As a consequence, strengthened social infrastructures and systems of management are key outputs. The flexibility in the mechanism allows dwellers to design their own pathways at their own pace. The principle of self-directed and flexible design thus refers not only to the houses and physical communities but also to the process itself, including financial regulation. CODI facilitates much of the process and has a crucial role to play, but the decisions and actions eventually taken depend entirely on the people involved, not only the people in the community, but also on other stakeholders in their local context. In this way, the process is people-centred, not only nominally or in principle, but in reality. Baan Mankong's complex process requires, and is purposefully designed to build many bridges and paths for negotiation between communities and other actors involved, and so can lead to

institutional learning. The metaphor of learning to 'dance together' illustrates the beauty and challenges implied.[62]

The logic of physical change: from object to subject

In Baan Mankong/ACCA, physical change is conceived and practised as a vehicle for social change. This gives the physical upgrading of informal houses and sites a twofold function: firstly, to improve the material reality of the urban poor and, beyond that, to foster confidence in the individual and collective skills and capacities of this historically marginalised group. Such concrete, visible action manifests and materialises the idea that people-led development is possible. It shows alternative possibilities and transformative potentials to its creators and to others, encouraging those in similar situations to follow. Moreover, setting this kind of precedent has the power to stimulate local government agencies to engage and collaborate in *co-production*.[63] This is an iterative process in which, over time, material improvements reinforce the terms of engagement with different actors and vice versa, building up the strength and power in and of the communities. Mr. Prapart Sangpradap, the community leader of Bangkok's Bang Bua canal community, which has functioned as a positive example in a number of respects, illustrates these dynamics:

> In Thailand, we have been fighting for a slum law for 10 years. We mobilized all the communities to support this bill […] But we never got those rights and we never got that bill. The way we got our land and housing and security only happened when we made concrete change and showed the possibility by people, showed a new way. We are the ones who have to make that change, according to our way. And that change becomes its own law.[64]

Boonyabancha and Mitlin summarise the programme's ambition as having 'two underlying dimensions: first, the creation of institutions based on relations of reciprocity (with communities); and second, the strengthening of relations between low-income community organizations such that they can create a synergy with the state'.[65] Hence, what is seen as crucial for sustainable synergies with the state is the collective mobilisation of poor women and men on scale: from community networking at the city level, to national and even trans-national levels. While the idea of branching out cross-scale is imprinted on the programme - 'as new relationships with city governments are established, larger-scale activities are possible'[66] - different institutional scales are considered very strategically. On a city scale, the aim is to activate local government resources (in the form of land, services and other resources), and on a national scale it is to push for policy change and wider political recognition.

These actions thereby reposition the city as a political entity at the centre of an otherwise de-politicised urban transformation. In other words, they are an account of Rancière's ethics and politics of recognition. Baan Mankong's way of conceptualising people as the subjects and not the objects of development, and of putting them, their energy, capacity and desires at the centre of the process, certainly constitutes a novel way of thinking, planning and acting in larger city development processes. Contrary to conventional strategies of simply providing physical houses – where housing is treated as a technical rather than political issue – and claiming to engage in participatory processes, the programme's ambition goes beyond the individual house because it is about generating power on the side of historically marginalised people through their collective organisation, in order for them to freely exercise and expand their rights in the city and become *legitimate development agents*.[67] When this ethos is scaled up through the promotion of collective partnerships or citywide platforms of sharing and collaboration between the urban poor and different stakeholders, it serves the educational

and emancipatory purpose of cultivating productive working partnerships with local governments, moving poor people from simply being participant-'stakeholders', to becoming 'with their savings and the power of large numbers, viable development partners'.[68] The ambition to create a 'new financial system for development',[69] in which poor people have access to private funding, is truly being advanced through ACCA and Baan Mankong in that 'it's not just a few projects here and there or a few solved problems – it is now a system'[70] reaching several hundred thousand households throughout Asia. Furthermore, the financial potential embraces more than replicability and the coverage of quantities; this is because the finance that comes from the people in their everyday struggle to secure housing, 'creates its own legitimacy, and the financial systems poor people create represent an institutionalization of that power that comes from the ground'.[71]

Participatory design in practice

Despite its vast potential, CODI's spatial discourse, whereby communities drive design, has not reached a consistent response at an urban scale beyond the mere provision of houses. The design solutions implemented as a result of the preceding processes are usually based on typologies. While the ownership and planning of the site are collective and community-based, once tenure is secured, the design and aesthetics of the houses are more individualistic. Depending on ability, financial capacity and time constraints, the design of the communities and houses take different forms, sometimes one typology is decided upon for a whole community, and sometimes the house typologies differ. Yet, the predominant focus centres on typologies rather than on developing and questioning design outcomes. Although 'fluctuation of resources across various CODI sites suggests a range of house sizes, design standards and overall planning, some communities simply seem to be benefiting from greater attention'[72] and others simply copy. This standardisation, however, implies serious problems

for the accommodation of diverse needs.

Some of the reasons for the limited typologies can be related to satisfying planning regulations because it reduces the risk of being refused permission when only housing design is submitted.[73] As Boonyabancha says, 'the art of doing poor people's housing is the art of getting governments to agree with your plans, which are always below standard'.[74] In the past, non-compliance has sometimes led to imprisonment of community leaders. Different experiences, however, show that collective action, for instance in form of inviting ministers to visit communities, sending letters and staging demonstrations has also led to changes in Thai standards, for example the minimum road width and minimum plot size were changed. Cost considerations appear as the second great reason for limitations in terms of typology. However, our research indicates that savings and improvements could be made during construction through better coordination, sequencing and pooling, and also if community members had a better understanding of design and implementation and were more involved in the process. Illustratively, several site-briefs that were issued by the communities during fieldwork addressed issues in the construction stage (cost saving/recycling/use of common space/continuous engagement of all members). Similar responses have been given to Archer, who researched the post-construction opinions of Baan Mankong's participants and found that even though perceptions differed between and even within communities, many problems rested on the built environment: 'problems remain with infrastructure and the environment, with garbage and smells from the canal and drains'.[76] Furthermore, individual perceptions of problems range from 'insufficient outside lighting', the loss of the natural environment, and 'it's better and neater, but before there was more privacy', to 'the culture of helping has decreased'.[77] In general, cost and time are often mentioned as limiting conditions, or even as severe problems, for several reasons, the major one being

that the process is so time and energy consuming that even without an in-depth design process many people drop out, or that those who are in urgent need of housing after incidents such as fire have to accept that the 'housing design is flawed' because they were limited by the budget.[78] Yet the ACCA experience tells that 'paradoxically, the lower the budget, the more seems to get done'[79] insofar as it pushes people to focus less on money and more on structural problems, enabling them to become active and to begin working together, so that ACCA now follows a logic of 'de-emphasiz[ing] the budget aspect'.[80]

Another important reason why communities often choose only one typology is to show their strength and community cohesion through visual integration with the wider city. In line with the research findings of Wissink et al.,[81] which show that regardless of income group, Bangkok's residents appear to want to live in gated communities, the choice of a single typology can be interpreted as a desire for the community to be '*orderly and beautiful*, much like a *moobarn jatsan* (gated estate), reflecting their new legal status as city residents. Thus, they favour identical facades and equal plot sizes, to meet the *standard of social acceptability*'.[82] Archer counters that equal plot sizes minimise resentment among community members and that row houses in contexts of land limitations are the most effective form of land use.[83] This issue recalls a well-established debate in the fields of architecture and urban design, in which authors have always challenged the physical determinism and utilitarian, functionalist perspectives embedded in a particular definition of design: the materiality of space as a social healing machine, a panacea for society's ills.

Community architects: a transformative potential

What is the potential role of design in moving toward a process and product in which spatial dimensions are not merely by-products of social and institutional decisions, but ones that open up a dialogue, challenging the current system and becoming a driver of change? The critical reflection on design that the programme is prompting also involves the role of the designer. In the Baan Mankong process, community architects provide the knowledge needed to make decisions and guide the conversation, thereby presenting possibilities. The combined factors of high densities, complex savings, and pre-construction preparation (while avoiding temporary housing solutions for cost reasons) require complex sequencing and coordination. Currently, the key role of the design professional in Baan Mankong seems to be the translation of aspirations and negotiations between households into a site master plan. This lays out the critical path for communities to upgrade or build anew. Yet, due to the sheer number of sites in the programme, the involvement of the community architect is greatly reduced after this stage, with, at times, not even a yearly visit. More often than not, the building typology and design product are based on prototypes and the quality is uneven across different communities. Since the architect is often unable to identify and present the full spectrum of possible options so that the community can determine its priorities, the choice of available housing typologies made available is detrimental to the urban design scale and densities on site. It seems that design in this context is restrictive rather than revelatory of new spatial interpretations. Working with prototypes and the very limited involvement of designers/architects is a potential block to the transformative potential of the Baan Mankong programme, because it narrows down a process and thereby renders it unnecessarily static. Seldom are bespoke solutions developed, usually only on sites with particular constraints, such as very high density. If communities were more engaged in the design process this would produce knowledge, create additional communication and place designers as facilitators in the decision-making process.

Another challenge posed by real-life practicality is to find a productive balance in community negotiations, decision-making and actions. There are certain stages in the programme in which *consensus* is reached, which plays an important role as a practical benchmark from which to move forward: moments such as closing site negotiations for shared ownership or 'being ready' to start construction, based on an agreed design and plan. These are moments when capabilities, support and power are acquired through the strength of the community members acting together. The more frequently this includes all members, the more it represents the solidarity with which to move forward. This is evident, for instance, when communities put mechanisms in place to support those struggling to meet the targets. To use Rancièrian vocabulary, the political actions are 'organised like a proof, a system of reasons'.[84] Verifications take place by transforming the words of universal equality into the form of logical proof, not simply through a transformation of words into actions but by the creation of a visible and audible set of arguments.[85] The reality that communities are not homogeneous groups but are necessarily defined by internal diversity, means that a continuous process of argumentation is required. While conflicts between individuals can be considered as something that needs to be settled, in our view conflict within a group can and should be reframed as something fruitful if used as a catalyst for polemical verification. Conceptualising consensus as only temporary, based on joint visions at a particular moment in time,[86] enables us to consider conflict and *dissensus* as something natural that society or groups of people need to learn to deal with and use productively. It is therefore necessary to move from *consensus* back into *dissensus*, especially in the realm of design and spatialities, thus increasing the potential for innovation. Although the experience of community architects identifies the positioning of the self in such an internal conflict as one of the big challenges, a positive reframing of conflictive situations might generate benefits.[87]

While the question remains whether the design process has more to offer than has been explored so far, without doubt:

> The community architects have opened up a whole new world of community planning […] Before, the only picture people had in their minds when you said 'housing for the poor' was the standard government box, [...] But when the community architects come … that process is so important in expanding people's ideas of what is possible with housing – even very low-cost housing.[88]

As the community architects Luansang, Boonmahathanakorn and Domingo-Price have identified, '[w]here communities sometimes have set notions of how development can be undertaken conventionally (for instance by bulldozing trees and flattening out the area in order to develop a housing site), community architects could help demonstrate new approaches, with people-centred and environmentally friendly aspects'.[89] However, this dimension of influencing community ideas is very delicate, since Baan Mankong/ACCA's highest principle is not to overly determine community decision-making processes. In this light, they have identified substantial challenges in creating community architecture because, on the one hand, they have to strike a balance between a visionary approach that increases the knowledge of what is possible, while on the other hand, the professionals have to relinquish their belief in their superior knowledge and, in its place, humbly learn to appreciate local knowledge, which is not always an easy or straightforward process. An interesting observation is that young architects appear to have fewer difficulties in assuming the facilitative role and are also more readily accepted by communities. This resonates with our belief in the centrality of a reconfigured design methodology:

If the demand for trained architects is increasing, methods of support for architects practicing 'participation' are essential. [...] Furthermore, it becomes essential how they can better define their identity and roles so as to not be marginalised or misappropriated by lesser convicted and qualified practitioners. Herein, there still exists a critical responsibility to cross-check even the most genuine of practices. If this is done so, strategically with internal vigour, the program can grow to maximize the potentials and efforts of all those involved.[90]

Baan Mankong/ACCA's approach of involving universities and their curricula into their work is advancing this notion considerably. This policy led to the formation of the Asian Community Architect Network (CAN) in 2010. Today, CAN links twenty-seven groups of young community architects in eighteen countries, and thirty-three universities in ten countries. In doing so, it has reached out to about one thousand students and young professionals.[91] A promising potential for design facilitation would be a debate on housing – a debate out of which an understanding of the context-specific relationship of housing to other aspects of life could collectively emerge: one in which housing could become more than 'houses', approximating Turner's 'housing as a verb'.[92] 'With only words, people won't get the picture; the actual design process drives the community to think and take actions, and eventually makes them understand not only the housing matter but also living and livelihood'.[93] It has already been recognised that 'The architects may also create tools to help the people see the bigger picture of their community, in the context of the surrounding environment and the city as a whole, so that they develop solutions that are complementary to and not isolated from this big picture'.[94] At the moment this appears to be a side-concern within the programme, even though the relationships of the site to the city are crucial for reaching scale. There seems to be space within the practical steps of the programme to do so, given

that initial mapping activities are already used to instigate more holistic concerns: 'The process of mapping itself also provides a good starting point for all community members to reflect on how they live in the community, how things relate to one another both socially and physically, and to identify the common community problems'.[95] Furthermore, the focus of design guidelines could be diversified to go beyond the issue of re-blocking and embrace principles concerning the site in the city, addressing dimensions of connectivity, public spaces, inclusivity and diversity. While such aspects are occasionally considered, a more explicit, consistent and detailed concern for the identification of context-specific needs as well as opportunities could yield more adequate spatial representations of this impressively flexible and open process.

What struck us as researchers was the great need for rental accommodation that exists for various reasons, mainly related to rural-urban labour migration. For instance, in the case of Bang Prong, a district in the province of Samutprakan, but within the Bangkok Metropolitan Region, informal housing mostly consists of informal renting. Many people there cannot, or do not want to join Baan Mankong, mainly because they do not want to own a house or cannot manage to save enough. At the same time, many landowners are present and prepared to negotiate, and the local mayor is supportive of Baan Mankong. Innovative design solutions here could be exemplary in adapting Baan Mankong to the reality of renting, taking advantage of the relative ease of collaboration between landowners, local government and informal dwellers to design inclusive developments of shared investment and mutual benefit. While an awareness of urban dynamics and their effect on land value is present, this could be addressed strategically in synergistic collaboration with different stakeholders.

Such considerations could bring the city to the community and open up the community to the city.

The built environment should not follow the logic of the currently dominant development; it should not become an *inclusion* into mainstream building forms but be transformative of these, visibly representing the values, principles and guidelines fundamental to Baan Mankong processes, and thus give visible validation to those ways of life that are finally finding acknowledgement through Baan Mankong. What if community design were to propose new ways of building in terms of density, quality, sustainability, affordability, productivity, flexibility, contingency and scale beyond the property lines of the site, and in doing so question predominant forms of city development? Innovative spatial development could establish the previously excluded/poor in their new position as legitimate actors in development, and present their informal survival practices as legitimate practices in the city. Synergistic development could happen, not only in terms of relationships with government agencies but also in terms of territories within a city. The programme could then affect a qualitative change in the production and appropriation of the city in the name of those newly legitimised development agents. Such steps would require additional methods for the analysis of conditions and opportunities on the territorial and institutional neighbourhood scale, and for thinking *ex novo* about planning and design - moments in which the broad, knowledge-sharing network of Baan Mankong and ACCA could bear additional fruits. In this way, politics would be enacted in a very emancipatory moment in which, based on the axiomatic assumption of general equality, the 'part of no parts', the urban poor in this case, dissensually claim to be part of the whole. Even though rarely emphasised, this logic lies very much within the possibilities of the programme: 'As people tape together house models, push around pieces of coloured paper representing scaled house plots on a plan and make decisions about the size and allocation of plots and open spaces, they are giving physical form to that new social system',[96] which is nothing other than a transformation of a sensory

fabric of being together.[97]

Not-a-conclusion but a starting point toward an architecture of *dissensus*

Corresponding to the innovation in community finance, which grants groups of urban poor recognition as legitimate development agents, community architecture has the potential to add another dimension to this legitimacy by endorsing previously 'unheard' ways of doing things. The two strategies are intertwined in multiple ways, not least through the consolidation of ideology and desired forms of life, and therefore reinforce each other. *Architecture* as *dissensus* offers opportunities to manifest this emerging alternative development in society through artistic and design practices that appeal to our perception and alter our sensemaking faculties, stimulating contestation over how we live and how our cities develop. Architecture not only provides space in which to live but can also offer new perspectives and open up new horizons on how to live. The possibility of living itself can be inscribed in space. Thus, allegorically speaking, life can be found in spaces due to their usability. Although it may not necessarily do so, architecture, as any art form, can give clues about the time in which we live. If art reflects an experience of life, it can create a feeling of recognition, of finding a previously unexpressed feeling or experience finally expressed, manifested, and by doing so, illuminate certain societal relations.

It is important to distinguish here between two dimensions of what *architecture of dissensus* can mean in this context. On the one hand, it refers to the way in which community members reposition themselves as viable development partners, thereby interrupting the dominant – fundamentally exclusive – way in which urban development happens. On the other hand, the spatial and aesthetic form that the development takes, and the values that it represents, can in themselves represent dissensus architecture. While the first alone already constitutes

much of the process of becoming a political subject, the second can add a critical edge, becoming an act of *giving* the poor a voice, which for Rancière is not the same as *assigning* them a voice through the expert or the literate point of view, but instead *inventing* them in order to ascribe them a voice.

The question here is how much the built environment perpetuates an established aesthetic regime or, in turn, disrupts it. The process of *dissensus* design can take different forms: from a conscious decision not to intervene physically in the built environment, to the production of spaces that explicitly challenge dominant, ideological perspectives. To become evident, then, requires a *partage du sensible*, which is not a new spatial ordering, but rather a new ordering of *logos*, as a way to define who can speak and participate in the affairs of the *polis* and who cannot. If aesthetics is defined as 'delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise' then political design, or emancipation through design, is a visualised and audible questioning of these delimitations. Whereas 'design consensus uproots the foundational political impulses that centre on disagreement',[98] design dissensus is the enlivening of these impulses that put forward different urban possibilities. If the lived experiences derived from the informal settlement, from the position of multiple socio-spatial marginalisation, were to inform the design and extrapolate themselves, then the result would be exactly this way of life, the way of life of the 'excluded' from the police order, an unprecedented presence that would add yet another dimension to the politics of recognition. We are not in a position here to offer a recipe for creating dissensus architecture, instead we argue for the need to continuously explore and elaborate a methodology.

The urban poor in Baan Mankong/ACCA are emerging as actors in their own development, their own history, through an act of decomposition and re-composition of the relationship between ways of doing, being and speaking. Their equality is becoming possible only because they are nominated as equals and not simply invited to participate.[99] This *becoming central* to the urban development of a city is a political act because it 'perturbs the order of things [...] creating a new political identity that did not exist in the existing order'.[100] Becoming present in the agenda and in the reality of urban development positions the urban poor – individually and collectively – in a different place from the one assigned to them by mainstream development practice. It thus constitutes a critique of numerical teleology, offering a political space, or a reconfiguration of a space 'where parties, parts or lack of parts have been defined [… making] visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise'.[101] The emancipatory logic of the Baan Mankong/ACCA programme repositions space and design away from an instrumental way of urban upgrading and towards a process that offers a renewed capacity to speak, to have an audience, and to overcome social barriers, and in doing so to 'conjure the community of equals by declaring its presence, assuming equality and thus forcing politics to occur'.[102]

Baan Mankong/ACCA is not a simple, participatory, design-centred programme. The design idea is being constructed through a more political reflection on design, revealing *dissensus*, in a Rancièrian sense, as a mechanism for generating strategic coalitions present in a momentary time and context. This addresses the causes of marginality, revealed through a process where 'design consensus uproots the foundational political impulses that centre on disagreement' and 'struggles over the real or different urban possibilities'.[103] Jacques Rancière's reflections offer a theoretical reconfiguration of design and architecture, laying bare their impurities and non-neutrality while also exposing the inherently political nature of participation, together with its political potential as contestation and dissensus in the production of urban form. Ultimately, such a

reconfiguration offers to reveal the lines of power and agency that are written and rewritten in cities, and to contest the spatial ordering that assigns everyone and everything its proper place.

Notes

1. Somsook Boonyabancha, Fr. Norberto Carcellar and Thomas Kerr, 'How Poor Communities are Paving their own Pathways to Freedom', in *Environment and Urbanization*, 24, 2 (Autumn 2012), pp. 441-62 (p. 461).

2. This paper is based on a research collaboration between the Development Planning Unit (DPU) and the Community Organisations Development Institute (CODI), the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), and the Community Architect Networks (CAN). In particular, it is the result of reflections on the Baan Mankong Housing Programme that have emerged in the course of three research projects by two of the DPU's Masters programmes (MSc Building and Urban Design in Development and MSc Urban Development Planning), which took place in 2011, 2012 and 2013 in Bangkok, where several communities at different stages of implementation were involved.

3. Mark Purcell, *The Down-Deep Delight of Democracy* (London: Blackwell-Wiley, 2013).

4. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, (London: Verso, 1999); Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005).

5. Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, *Participation: The New Tyranny?*, (London; New York: Zed Books Ltd, 2001); Markus Miessen, *The Nightmare of Participation* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2010); Ronan Paddison, 'Some Reflections on the Limitations to Public Participation in the Post-Political City', *L'Espace Politique, 8, 2 (2009)*, < http://espacepolitique.revues.org/1393 > [accessed 01 August 2013]; Gui Bonsiepe, 'Design and democracy'*, Design Issue,* 21, 2 (2006), pp. 3-12.

6. Paddison, 'Some Reflections on the Limitations to Public Participation in the Post-Political City'.

7. Ibid.

8. Alexandre Apsan Frediani and Camillo Boano, 'Processes for Just Products: The Capability Space of Participatory Design', in *The Capability Approach, Technology and Design*, ed. by Ilse Oosterlaken and Jeroen van den Hoven (= *Philosophy of Engineering and Technology*, 5 (2012)), pp. 203-22.

9. Bechir Kenzari, *Architecture and violence* (Barcelona: Actar, 2011).

10. Nadir Lahiji, 'Is Building the Practice of Dissensus? Architecture between Aesthetics and Politics'. Paper presented at Architecture and the Political, Fourth International Symposium on Architectural Theory, Beirut, Lebanon, 10-12 November 2011, <http://www.lau.edu.lb/news-events/conferences/architecture-political/docs/lahiji.pdf> [accessed 04 March 2013].

11. Mustafa Dikeç, 'Politics is Sublime', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* 30 (2012), pp. 262-79; Mustafa Dikeç, 'Immigrants, *Banlieues*, and Dangerous Things: Ideology as an Aesthetic Affair', *Antipode,* 45, 1 (2013), pp. 23-42; Purcell, *The Down-Deep Delight of Democracy.*

12. C. Greig Crysler, Stephen Cairns and Hilde Heynen, 'Introduction', in *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory*, ed. by C. Greig Crysler, Stephen Cairns and Hilde Heynen (Cornwell: SAGE Publications, 2012), pp. 1-38.

13. Reinhold Martin, *Utopia's Ghost* (Minneapolis; London: Minnesota University Press, 2005); Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 2009).

14. Ole W. Fischer, 'Architecture, Capitalism and Criticality', in *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory,* ed. by C. Greig Crysler and others, pp. 56-69.

15. Henry Sanoff, *Community Participation Methods in Design and Planning* (New York: Wiley, 2000); Henry Sanoff, 'Multiple Views on Participatory Design', *International Journal of Architectural Research*, 2, 1 (2007), pp. 57-69; Jaime Hernandez-Garcia, 'Slum Tourism, City Branding and Social Urbanism: the Case of Medellin, Colombia', *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 6, 1 (2013), pp. 43 – 51.16. Kurt Iveson, 'Cities Within the City: Do It Yourself Urbanism and the Right to the City', in *International Journal of*

Urban Research, 37, 3 (2013), pp. 941-56.

17. Margit Mayer, 'First World Urban Activism: Beyond Austerity Urbanism and Creative City Politics', *City*, 7, 1 (2013), pp. 5–19.

18. Purcell, *The Down-Deep Delight of Democracy.*

19. As Ettore Sottsass eloquently commented in the late 1960s, 'design is a way of discussing life…of discussing society, politics, eroticism, food and even design. At the end, it is a way of building up a possible figurative utopia or metaphor about life' (Paola Antonelli, 'States of Design 04: Critical Design', *Domus*, <http://www.domusweb.it/en/design/states-of-design-04-critical-design-/ > [Accessed 21 February 2013]). Hence, design becomes a condition of possibility in which excess rudely intrudes into otherwise ontologically and politically stable orders, allowing what was previously invisible or unheeded to emerge within a societal and political realm.

20. This recent shift in architectural, design and development debates seems to have two angles. On one side, design practitioners are searching for a specific ethical role by investigating the complexities of architecture and urbanism. This shift comprises designing spaces, places and interventions that enable socially just development, produce alternative means of engagement, and reconsider citizenship and participation (see Ann Thorpe, 'Design as Activism: A Conceptual Tool' presented at the Changing the Change, Turin, Italy, 2010; Carl DiSalvo, 'Design, Democracy and Agonistic Pluralism', in *Proceedings of the Design Research Society Conference*, Montreal, (2010), <http://www.designresearchsociety.org/docs-procs/DRS2010/PDF/031.pdf > [accessed 06 August 2013]; Alastair Fuad-Luke, *Design Activism, Beautiful Strangeness for a Sustainable World* (London: Earthscan, 2009); Thomas Markussen, 'The Disruptive Aesthetics of Design Activism: Enacting Design Between Art and Politics', in *Making Design Matter*, Nordes, the 4th Nordic Design Research Conference, 29-31 May 2011, School of Art and Design, Aalto University, Helsinki, pp. 1-9; < http://ocs.sfu.ca/nordes/index.php/nordes/2011/paper/view/406 > [accessed 07 August 2013]; Nadir Lahiji, *The Political Unconscious of Architecture. Re-opening Jameson's Narrative* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011). On the other side, development practitioners have gone through a reflexive, critical rediscovery of architecture and design, experimenting with a new pragmatic radicalism oriented toward more sophisticated outcomes achieved with an emphasis on design (see Pierluigi Nicolin, 'Architecture Meets People', *Lotus International*, 145 (2011), pp. 12-14; *Beyond Shelter. Architecture and Human Dignity*, ed. by Marie Aquilino (New York; Los Angeles: Metropolis Book, 2011). Yet, despite interesting methodological innovations and a clear emphasis on agency, the political dimension remains unquestioned.

21. Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, (London: Verso, 2006), p. 13.

22. Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. by Julie Rose, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 30.

23. Peter Hallward, 'Jacques Rancière and the Subversion of Mastery', in *Jacques Rancière: Aesthetics, Politics, Philosophy*, ed. by Mark Robson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 26-45 (p. 26).

24. Jacques Rancière, 'The Thinking of Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics', in *Reading Rancière: Critical Dissensus*, ed. by Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp (London; New York: Continuum, 2011), pp. 1-17 (p. 7).

25. The Community Organisations Development Institute (CODI) was established in July 2000 as a public organisation under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security in Thailand following the merge between the Urban Community Development Office (UCDO) and the Rural Development Fund (see Somsook Boonyabancha, 'A Decade of Change: From the Urban Community Development Office (UCDO) to the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) in Thailand: Increasing Community Options Through a National Government Development Programme' *IIED Working Paper 12 on Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas* (2003), pp. i-36). CODI is the outcome of a long-standing public commitment to urban and rural development by the national Thai government, which preceded the United Nations

Millennium Development Goals Declaration and their associated targets. Set up in 1992 with a nationwide government initiative and its implementing and coordinating agency, UCDO had the explicit aim to address urban poverty after Thailand's economic success during the 1980s and early 1990s had brought little benefit to the poorest groups. It is dedicated to the transformation of the living conditions of the urban poor, and their relationships with the state and the private sector through 'build[ing] a strong societal base using the collective power of civil groups and community organizations' (CODI website, 'CODI Results: Statistics January 2011'

< http://www.codi.or.th/housing/results.html > [accessed 26 February 2013]. Guided by the premises of 'unlocking people energy' (Somsook Boonyabancha, 'Unlocking People Energy', in *Our Planet: The magazine of the United Nations Environment Programme*, 16, 1 (2005), pp. 22-3) and placing people as subjects, rather than objects, of development, it supports and empowers urban and rural community organisations through financial assistance and skills training in the process of housing development. In addition, ACHR was formed in 1988 as the first platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience by different urban activist organisations in the Asian region. They aimed to advance housing rights and tackle urban poverty in a context of increasing forced evictions. While initially focused on forced evictions, a DFID grant allowed for capacity-development towards a regional intervention process. Since 2000, ACHR has been working with community savings and the model of the Community Development Fund. In some countries, ACHR receives support from governments whereas in others it has managed to up-scale its programmes independently. The Asian Coalition for Community Action Programme (ACCA) is the culmination of ACHR's efforts and in the three years it has been running, 2010 – 2013, it has reached 165 cities in 19 countries (ACHR website: 'About ACHR', < http://www.achr.net/ > [accessed 18 July 2013]).

26. Though Rancière shares some common ground with other Left-leaning thinkers who sought an alternative to Marxism, especially after his break with Althusserian structuralism and philosophy due to its elitism. He rejected the rigid and hierarchical distinction between science and ideology that this philosophy presupposed, accusing it of distrusting spontaneous popular movements. Refusing the Althusserian approach, he turned instead to the archive in the form of an intellectual history of labour. This was an attempt to recover the virtue of 'the worker' by showing that workers resist not merely the hardship of work but the very system that confines them to the role of worker in the first place (Samuel A. Chambers, 'Jacques Rancière and the Problem of Pure Politics, *European Journal of Political Theory,* 10, 3 (2010), pp. 303-26). In this, he discovered the 'disorder' of the nineteenth-century French workers and their refusal to play the part they had been assigned to, thus breaking down the Platonic legacy and centrality of 'order.' In this respect, Rancière believes that the role of the philosopher is not to give his/her voice to the silent aspirations of the dominated, but to add his/her voice to theirs, therefore, to hear their voices, rather than interpret them. These notions were further developed in works like *The Philosopher and his Poor* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

27. Jacques Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics' *Theory & Event*, 5, 3 (2001) < http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v005/5.3ranciere.html > [accessed 05 January 2013].

28. Samuel A. Chambers, 'Jacques Rancière and the Problem of Pure Politics'.

29. Andrew Schaap, 'Hannah Arendt and the Philosophical Repression of Politics' in *Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene. The Philosophy of Radical Equality*, Jean-Philippe Deranty and Alison Ross (London: Continuum, 2012), pp. 145-166; *Reading Rancière*, ed. by Bowman and Stamp.

30. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1980), p. 93.

31. Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, p. 29.

32. Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics'.

33. Maria Muhle, 'Politics, Police and Power: From Foucault and Rancière' (unpublished paper presented at the Jan Van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht, 8th November 2007); *Reading Rancière*, ed. by Bowman and Stamp.

34. Not surprisingly, like many other postwar French speaking intellectuals who worked on language as a place where 'perilous crossings of epistemic thresholds leave their material traces (Rey Chow and Julian Rohrhuber, 'On Captivation: a Remainder from the Indistinction of Art and Nonart' in *Reading Rancière*, ed. by Bowman and Stamp, pp. 44-72 (p. 33)), one of the major influences on Rancière is Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972). Rancière seems to continue with the Foucaultian explorations of the subterranean discursive strata that underline knowledge formations, stressing the silent witness of history whose anonymity and wordless speech continue as a form of participation and partaking. Rancière also continues with Foucault's politics and ethic through his focus on equality, justice and disagreement.

35. Mustafa Dikeç, 'Police, Politics, and the Right to the City', *GeoJournal*, 58*,* 2-3 (2002), pp. 91-8.

36. Giuseppina Mecchia, 'The Classics and Critical Theory in Postmodern France: The case of Jacques Rancière' in *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*, ed. by Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts (Duke University Press, 2009), p. 77.

37. Jacques Rancière, 'Xénophobie et politique, entretien avec Jacques Rancière' [Xenophobia and politics, talks with Jacques Rancière], in *La xénophobie en banlieue, effets et expressions*, ed. By Florence Haegel, Henri Rey and Yves Sintomer (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), p. 215, cited in English from Mark Angélil and Cary Siress, 'The Paris *Banlieue*: Peripheries of Inequity', *Journal of International Affairs*, 65, 2 (Spring/Summer 2012), pp. 57-67 (p. 64).

38. Dikeç, 'Police, Politics, and the Right to the City'.

39. Derek Ruez, '"Partitioning the Sensible" at Park 51: Rancière, Islamophobia, and Common Politics,' *Antipode* 45, 5 (2012), p. 15.

40. Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus on Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. and ed. by Steven Corcoran

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