

Working With Magic

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DP: I think Anne wants to start by explaining why she was not interested in Starhawk! [Laughter]

AQ: No, no, no! It's not Starhawk its the use of Starhawk here...

DP: Here?

AQ: Here in Paris, because the impression I had of this session... because, I had one with (I don't know how you call it in English), with people working in temporary work (but permanently paid), working in culture, in films, theatre, things like that . They have a group in France, its very active, and this group had many problems, disagreements between each other and a friend imagined to call Starhawk to come to those people and make magic for them, to reconcile them. And it was horrible!

The few things she gives in her book ["Femmes, Magie et Politique"] which I have translated into French. I don't agree at all with one of the chapters, the one on psychoanalysis, which is really the most regressive psychoanalysis you can do and the most authoritarian. The girl she is psychoanalysing is a member of her network and of course then the transfer (I know very well about transfer, I have been psychoanalysed by Felix Guattari, being members of the same group) the transfer is very strong. The transfer in the way of Freuds speaking of transfer. So this kind of psychoanalysis with someone who is objectively your chief, Starhawk or Felix, gives a lot of results its true but those results break down as soon as the relation is broken, it is not a lasting psychoanalysis. And it may be very dangerous, people commit suicide in these kinds of situations. So I disagree completely with this chapter.

Also my criticism is about something we find very often with feminist theory, that is a kind of shutting off of all kinds of other theories with no discussion. For instance the name of Freud is never mentioned in this chapter and she doesn't discuss her way of doing things with others. I think it is a problem very often with feminism. In France we had people building theory which were sort of *décalque* [tracing], you know imitation with the male one, replacing male words with female ones. But this doesn't work and you must combine different levels of analysis, about women's place in society, dominated people's place in society, and also domination by women sometimes.

Why I was a little concerned is that, as she [starhawk] says very well in the part about groups, each session is a session in the history of a group, you have several sessions, you can't have a magic session by itself. Because this magic session, if it is by itself, is exactly what is called in the United States, psycho-sociology and again it can give results but generally it gives results by making people very bad. It works if the authority is recognised by everyone but again it is authoritarian. Putting horizontal authoritarian relations, which are always there at the beginning (some have knowledge, some have not, some are teachers some are not). To work these relations you can't do it in one session, this should be magic in the bad sense of the term. A sort of **ha ha** [waves the arms] and it doesn't last.

DP: maybe you would like to say what was your [kim] idea about? Because it was not at all in this sense. I think you didn't expect a "magic" session?

KT: No not at all!

DP: entering into some kind of therapy or whatever! But I think its an interesting question at the same time as you [kim] wanted to discuss what you [anne] proposed to speak about, which is what could be the relationship between architecture and magic? And not to do a 'magics' session.

AQ: But then you have a second problem, in this starhawk book there is nothing about the relation between architecture and magic. Magic there is really used to change relations inside groups and to build empowerment of groups. Maybe architects, maybe theatre people... she did mostly with militants, but she did sometimes with other people. She is really very clever in militancy and for instance she does something very interesting... she is fond of this demonstration against the G7 of G8 and for instance at the G8 in Edinburgh she went there six months before with friends to warn peasants around there that there will be a big demonstration and that they need places to put their tents; in exchange for which they will explain to them new techniques of permaculture. And they found some peasants who are doing this, to do an exchange and it was a success. They were able to have then place for 100,000 people in Edinburgh which is something which had never been seen since the revolution in the 17th Century. So it is very strange for the people of Edinburgh it was something great in a way **but** it was recommended by all authorities not to speak about it so there was no forecasting, so nobody knew about it.

Her concern for all the people present in a situation is quite interesting and find something to do with each, and not say "those are the minority they are not interesting", or "those are the minority they are interesting" and by force they must think of them.

Also the idea that, she did it already in Seattle and tried in Genoa but could not completely. People are gathered there to make a big demonstration there but they don't agree on what to do. In their co-ordinations she says "Everybody says what they are going to do" and do it only for the others to know about it, not in order to have agreement. We had something like that in '68 but it was not so theorised. And this of course was very efficient in Seattle because the (American) trade unions were there. And these trade unions had the capability of forecasting the thing and also being believed. It was the first time so there was not so much police, because in Genoa they had a lot of police of course. And in Genoa she did not manage, there were white militants who were not so violent and the black bloc. The white militants were completely upset with the black ones who wanted to fight the police. And it seems that there are very bad memories of this because some people say that its not true but that they put the black bloc on purpose in front of the police. One person was killed and there are very bad measures against all militants in all Italy. Those black blocs were coming from Germany mostly, and you had a sort of racist aspect...

DP: This is the problem with resistance. There are many types of resistance including the tradition of violent resistance, to get the women armed and this is still alive in the radical left, or whatever. Its sure that you expect violence when you are provoking violence. It's the same cycle you are maintaining.

AQ: But the interesting point with Starhawk is that she pretends not to be violent and is not, but makes non-violent active resistance by sittings in front of the police. For instance in the struggle which is against a nuclear plant in California, the women took their clothes off and the police became mad. Finally the women were taken out because the police couldn't bear them nude inside their jail!

But in some other cases it can become... well with the Italian case I think it would not be a good idea!

DP: I think somehow, what is interesting is she is preaching these techniques of group work and creating relationships between people that increase the trust: the trust in yourself, the others and the group. And she creates little by little another world, and this is the kind of magic aspect to it, in which you are living. Which you can do through body techniques, yoga and mental techniques. So they can

resist for example if they are put in prison, they can... reply with a smile when they are provoked. Things which somehow are another world within the world, in which the relationship has another meaning, and another language also. Maybe this is something that can bring a good question for us, which would be how to create, through space and through space-working, another world within a world? Is this possible? And this comes somehow to our earlier discussion about, for example cultures that are not Western cultures, immigrants that are coming from non-Western cultures living in this space, but at the same time through small objects, rituals or through ways of living they are creating another space, which relates more to them. They are inhabiting space, spaces which are often very bad conditions for living, 15 in a room and they can still bear it. They can still be able to transpose this world.

I remember Helene Cixous said at a certain moment when the *sans-papiers* were at La Cartoucherie they had a water tub and they would use it as it would be the mill? or it would be the river, or it would be etc. She said that she was impressed by their dignity and by their way of inhabiting the space, which is really very precarious and transforming into a stage of another world. In which there were rituals.

SV: It tends towards a resilience, it perhaps creates resilience?

AQ: Its not only resilience because in this case they were in the grounds of a theatre and this theatre as a place showed plays about immigration. And so it was a work in a way. They were living there and working with a lady who was the head of this theatre and with the people around her to make a play about the condition of people who are not documented. And so of course, as soon as you work with those people for instance, you come out of the normal French thing, which is if you want to integrate you must forget your own culture. For instance in their culture, of Africa, everything around water is very important. And so they were taking back all their traditions but with a prospect which was to put it in a play about: where do they come from, why they are here and how they want to live here? This in the *spirale* for instance is not only as it was done with the *intermittents*, just a sort of dance and that's all, but its making everyone equally distant with the focus of living in France for instance and giving a perspective which is the past and the future. So its quite political.

KT: One of the questions you raised in our emails Doina, was how only certain signs would perhaps be recognisable to only certain groups of people. And so how would people recognise this difference, this...

DP: This other world?

KT: Yes, because it wont be for everyone.

DP: Maybe magic has to do with this, not everybody has access to it. So why should everybody have access to it? I remember Doreen Massey speaking about the fact that an open space for example a 'democratic space,' doesn't mean that everybody has access to it. It just means that the decisions of exclusion are democratically taken. An open space doesn't exist.

SV: Which is very often the assumed goal, that what you strive for is something completely open.

KT: But what you may have is that exclusions take place in an unspoken way, which would follow existing patterns of exclusion.

DP: So lets say: how the magic aspect of space could be readable and by whom? This could be a question. And what are the conditions necessary to access?

KT: I remember yesterday when we were walking in the Park [de la Villette] Anne has asked me whether I have thought this was 'magic architecture.' And I think for me it is not, or not yet. But for you [Anne] there is something that is, that maybe comes from memories and experience...?

AQ: My idea is that architecture, landscape architecture resolves to make magic, which in this place [La Villette], a flat place which was completely wrecked with one concrete huge thing (which has become the museum now) was a place completely forbidden to the people around. At that moment, like in my part of Paris, some people went there mostly young adults or adolescents, to fight each other, making crime things like that and it was a horrible place. Of course by pouring a lot of money it has become something else in which people can have a nice time. It's a part of magic. But of course it could have been done differently by people invading this, making themselves their garden.

I think that architecture pretends always to change the sense of a place in another sense. Except when it is rehabilitation, gentrification and things like that where the sense is very narrow, which is just about value coming up. But in other cases and it maybe for bad reasons or poor reasons, but still interesting. For instance in the French history of architecture and urbanism, you have the cathedral, it's a good example, the cathedral were much bigger at one time. There are several explanations, but one public explanation is that the church wanted all society to be able to be in and gathered and not the rich inside with the poor outside. Perhaps its wrong but it was part of a creation of the society of the 12/ 13th Century which was an urban society. The second example of the same kind we had a king in France, called Henri IV, this Henri IV was protestant at the beginning, who when he became the king of France became Catholic but found that this French society was completely stupid with these horrible aristocrats. And so he decided to create a court (In other part of Europe it was the same thing at the same moment) and places in which aristocrats and bourgeois could mix. So he created walking places in Paris, opened the air in Paris and changed Paris with Les Tuileries, Place des Vosges, with ideas of urbanism, and the free river with not a lot of houses on the bridges. Of course its a kind of magic aspect and I think its important to look to architecture as this and not only as a sort of answer to will of powerful people. What it creates, how it changes people, is not the same thing as magic in psycho-sociology or militant groups. Its something else.

DP: Well it is somehow in the same way if the king was aware of the effects he was producing. He knew that by creating these spaces he will have a society in which will be governed in a different way.

AQ: Having read a little about it, it's a little like what she [starhawk] says, its thinking with your sensibility of your body. There is this bridge with a lot of houses just in front of your window, you don't like this, you want to be free, and you propose to everybody to become free, like you want to become free first. And it works for the others if it is something nice. Generally when you are doing architecture, for instance social housing, you have to respect this norm and this norm and this norm, and the state norms are so nicely done that all the design is always done by the norms. And you have to think how could I live in this and not obey to the norms. And this is the thing of magic, you find a lot of people to think with you about what to do.

For instance in my part of Paris, there is a little group with whom I am a marginal member, they decided to create *un pension de famille* that is social housing for homeless persons, 21 flats for homeless and a flat for a couple looking after them and having a lot of people coming in the common spaces. They are ecologist militants and so they wanted to have windows in wood and none in plastic. So they designed with the architect the windows in wood and they put their project in a competition about ecological architecture. They won the prize which is paying for these different windows.

SV: My recent readings of magic have been in TAZ by Hakim Bey and temporary opportunities and I wondered how that relates to the permanence of big gestures such as the one of the King that you have mentioned that are a much larger scale. I wonder how magic might be relevant to architecture on a short term, temporary basis.

AQ: But what do you call temporary? Reading for you this cover [of Femmes, Magie et Politique] Really this magic, that is transformation. The problem is that is it the transformation of people in their heads? And they go out, like the mass (I have been raised as a Catholic) you come out of the mass, you have communion and you feel... 'I am ok' and the day after you make your naughty and silly things! If it is this, then I am not interested. But I feel that having some rules of collective work for democratic decision as it is written on that, on several sessions for a task transforming space then you can transform space in a way which will give chances of acting in another way to a lot of other people than yourself.

SV: Perhaps magic and the effects of architecture start to converge if you see them in that way. If the effect of magic is to change the space but also the potential effect of architecture is the change of space.

KT: Do the effects have to be known in advance? Because otherwise it is a kind of control?

AQ: No, no, it's a desire of free-ness. The TAZ I am not very well with that, because it is sort of a metaphor of pirates and I don't like metaphors so much [laughs]. In my family I have *Corsaire* and not *Pirates*, I have one eighth of *St Malo Corsaire*.

DP: I think there is this question of magical thinking, and magic within the economy of knowledge. if there is another type of knowledge that is not based on knowing or on proof or whatever, but based on unknowing of risk taking or of surprise.

AQ: But the first thing...

DP: I haven't finished! [laughs] And when we speak of magic knowledge or magic thinking, for example this is used very much in psychiatry, for example to speak about children's ways of thinking sometimes.

AQ: *ah non ca c'est Lévi-Strauss oh la la!*

DP: That's true. Or, non Western cultures ways of thinking, so there are different ways of understanding. I think with children this interests me because children are people we are dealing with and we are never taking into consideration. You have lets say 'users' that are children, they are living in a space lets say 10 years with a way of thinking which is different from the one of adults. And we are not considering, we are always considering the way of thinking and living of the adults, assuming that they are always in a relation of power and domination by the adults. I would say, could we also incorporate or deal as people doing space with users that are practicing magical thinking? Or how to ...

AQ: No but wait, this way of saying 'magical thinking' is really the way of a scientific occidental people who oppose the magic thinking of the children, of the 'undeveloped,' of women, of the old and anybody, to their scientific, which is creating an abstract position of the subject in front of things. A universal position for instance, which what you think must not be linked to the very situation in which you are. But, the idea that you can... it is difficult to just say that is 'magical thinking' because then it comes in the idea that magic thinking is nothing.

DP: It's not at all this! I am questioning our way of thinking as architects and what we are assuming that the user is, what the user is thinking or working. In a traditional way, I am not saying we

are doing this, but traditionally we are trained in this way, there are certain ways of thinking, rules that assume a universal user, doing and behaving in a certain way and I am just bringing this question. People who are just thinking in a different way, it could also be for people who are mentally ill. In which the way... well and of course there are also normal people who think or behave in a different way...

AQ: Yes but if magic in the good sense of the term is implied the idea that you can transform things by means other than by obeying to scientific law. The idea of transformation is really the core of magic thinking. In the sense of Starhawk for instance people are calling them witches. Then you have a very good example in French literature of the supposed child and magic thinking which is the story of the little prince of Saint Exupery. The little prince says can you draw me a ... *mouton*?

NL: a sheep

AQ: yes a sheep, and the guy says "how am I going to do this?" he doesn't know how to draw and he draws a carton, a box, with little holes for the sheep to breathe. And the little Prince says 'oh yes, this is very nice, it is exactly the way I wanted my sheep to be designed.' [laughs].

For me the Levi-Strauss *Pensée Magique*, the very strange thing with *Pensée Magique*, is he analyses the myths of the native Indians in Latin America, analysing the transformation of human beings in plants, or plants in human beings, or animals all this *règne* [reign]...

DP: He analysed it in a structuralist way, as a scientist.

AQ: Yes in a structuralist way as a scientist, but he uses the power of transformation those people have put in, because he says 'here in my table there is an animal missing' so I am going to look to more myths, *récits* [stories] to find this animal back. So his table is in fact believing in the transformation in a way but he doesn't, he makes a table for you saying I am a scientist those are magic and this is a table for us.

DP: But I think that he really doesn't take the challenge of magical thinking at all because he doesn't get anything from it. And I think this might be a question, how you can even deal with this, do you have to change your own way of thinking as well? This was somehow a bit the question of Freud also with the Interpretation of Dreams and all this, but I think that Freud was a little bit more successful

AQ: because he was a doctor!

DP: He had also a practice, but also he questioned it, he changed it completely. The practice as it became, it was not scientific anymore it was very much based on body practice somehow; on ways of speaking in a certain physical condition. He was also a bit of a poet if you are reading Freud you realise that, and he learnt a lot from his family, which is not the same as the case of Levi-Strauss. So I think that there is a serious question about how you are practicing.

My interest in magic to say is that... we have now to trace back how we arrived at this question! Because there are lots of confusion also. We had a session that Kim has organised about pedagogy and pedagogy as architectural practice, and I think that the question of magic arose within these issues... I mean for me, there is a bit of magic in the practice of pedagogy.

AQ: sometimes! Not always!

DP: Well, I think you are really not in control of what are the results of pedagogical practice, that sometimes it works incredibly, sometimes it doesn't. And it has to do lot with the conditions that have to be there including the people that are teaching and learning, what are their disposition and openness? So this was one, and the other was my experience with EcoBox which was another context in which the question of magic came in. Because there were events in which you have somebody who the day before or the day after who would do very uninteresting things, nothing

remarkable, nothing interesting, sometimes even bad things, and at that very moment because of a certain spatial disposition, a certain crowd of people that are there and certain types of things that are discussed, suddenly they become somebody else, say interesting things, behave in a certain way, it was a case with a few people. Some young people for example that would do... whatever... you can't speak with them the day before and then they would cook and do very interesting things. So my question was, it was a genuine question, what happened? Why it was possible in that space at that moment, with the devices we had, to have this change? Also everybody felt, I mean we discussed the day after, and there were a few people saying 'but it was magic, what happened?'

SV: the fact that it was commented on.

DP: Yes, it was incredible as a feeling. So it was the same space, the same people, but something else was there or happened that transformed the condition. So this was my question. And is it possible to understand this? And how a practice could deal with the means or with the tools...?

KT: It might be possible to understand a little bit, but I don't know if its possible to predict it. For example, I think in the case of teaching you just don't know, it could be the timing, or what has happened the day before, who is there, I don't think you'd ever be able to plan it.

DP: Of course you can't plan everything, but maybe you can plan more. I mean that's why somehow for me Starhawk is... well I don't know much about her, what interests me in her case and in a very different domain, was the fact that she tries to give lets say an explanation about rules and means, and configuration that could enable a situation to take place. And my question in architecture would be, or in pedagogy, could be could you imagine, or think about pedagogy more in terms of other types of rules than the ones that we are used to and taught about? That could enable these moments that you obtain but without knowing how it happened! To have more of this and to have them more sustainable. So this is my interest in this topic for example. With the means of architects, I don't think we have to do therapy or whatever. It has to be by analogy transposed in architecture. And maybe as you say, architecture is already doing this, but you have to understand it in a different way.

AQ: Architecture for instance is supposed to make a *Carrosse* into a *Citrouille* I don't know the name in English.

DP: You should translate!

NL: It's Cinderella's coach and horses transformed from a pumpkin.

[laughter]

AQ: This is the role of architecture. But not in cars, in buildings....

Perhaps cars. Because you see, with this economic crisis a lot of people are going to live in cars, in caravans, in camping places and it may be a role of young architects to think how to live properly in those places. For instance the old sea containers, on Amsterdam harbour there is a building made of containers with students inside, having each their container, it is very nice and very cheap. And at the moment its really the main problem, cheap housing for a lot of people who are not able to find one or being thrown out the one they are in because they are not able to pay.

DP: So for this, an architect has to read the coach in the pumpkin already; has to identify exactly which parts of the pumpkin could become structural or whatever [laughs].

NL: perhaps being able to read usefulness out of waste. In this book

AQ: which one?

NL: 'La poubelle et l'architecte - vers le emploi des matériaux' to turn discarded materials into something useful.

AQ: yes its very important

NL: I have touched a little on this with the work at Village Underground, where we were always trying to use discarded materials

SV: is there another question about how you might imagine changing the pumpkin into something different though, so that you can use the pumpkin in a different way? As architects its in that practice that thinking about magic might actually change how we look at things.

DP: Yes, but I think its not only the usefulness of it

AQ: Yes.

DP: Its also..

AQ: The pleasure!

DP: Yes the pleasure, the creativity and imagination. You really need a bit of an effort, to accept that you are sitting on pallets for example. And this is a bit the set of rules that I am speaking about that needs to be appropriated or you need to pass with. Which is the kind of the magical quality of the palette, that has to be read by the others. Otherwise they will be seen only as pallets, and this happens for example when we have applied for money at the prefecture, the police, and we have shown our projects of pallets and gardens and they would say "What?!" [laughter] "but these are pallets." You know, then there were people that were owing the pallets calling us: 'we want our pallets back.' [laughter] 'you are misusing them' so they were not interested. So you have... or to make lets say the magical aspects of it readable easily there is a poetic attached to it, there might be people sensitive to it. And they could be described by themselves, the way you assemble them or whatever, or you have to be explicit in describing them in a certain way. Like by words... or by using them...

AQ: I think in the future days there will be some money, if there is some left for research on this, on re-use.

NL: I think there is interest generated from it as well, for example a house done in America [scraphouse] made entirely from reclaimed material. I think they had to wait three weeks to search the dumps, to collect the materials. For example, one wall is made from shingles using old road signs...

KT: I think Doina's question of how to read materials is important here, because I see this project and think it is great because I am an architect and I am looking at it in a certain way. There is one wall inside that is made of old 'yellow pages,' so to reuse them is better than recycling the material which would downgrade it, but reusing in this way, for someone else is... well only yellow pages. The value people give to it, or attach to it is not the same, so how you can change this? I think with the re-use of materials there is an aesthetic which appeals to architects, but actually comes from poverty or necessity, that you have no other choice that to reuse waste.

DP: I think it takes time, people will get more and more used to being with it. But then, its not only the physical aspect, it has to do with a way of understanding it a way of dealing with it and that's why with children its nice because you will say this [holds a pen] is a small... I don't know, a dog! And they will immediately accept this and they will play with it...

KT: And argue with you! To say it is a camel, not a dog.

[Laughs]

KT: And change it in their own way.

DP: But then its the question, who is deciding about this other world? That you are creating through magic, who is deciding that this is a dog. It's the architect only or..?

AQ: You propose, they dispose, like god and you decide at the end.

DP: So somehow with this open use that we had in EcoBox for example it was a little bit about informing what this will become, you know, what qualities something that would be different than what they were used to, could become. It was for example we wanted to create a rainwater collector and one of the kids wanted it to be like a flower, and it did work finally in this way, but it was an idea that came from somebody that had a metaphor which was very strong. He imposed his metaphor on it and then we went further in doing the water collector as a flower

AQ: *Bruit ou silence, c'est semiotique* [laughter]

DP: Which was fine in that case, but in other cases it was less metaphoric and less direct. It was very much about leaving objects with use that can evolve or can be layered on the top of it.

SV: There's an acceptance that there might be conflict as well in terms of people wanting to put their own... as you say.... There's creating space for discussion about what that might be. Perhaps that where it has a direct impact on the practice? As an architect responds.

DP: ...When we have started with the garden in pallets, we were thinking that nobody would like to plant in it, you know it was very improbable that people would be interested.

AQ: It's the social movement in Paris at the moment, there are people planting everywhere in Paris

DP: Which is nice! So, maybe it went in this direction but little by little at a certain moment, when we had all this, with people planting, doing things, kids taking control of things, we have realised that they have entered into a world which... was quite crazy, I mean if they would have known that in the beginning they would have said 'no.' But little by little they got used to it.

AQ: Why would they have said no, it was very nice?

DP: When we have started nobody knew what it could be

AQ: It's ok, but you said if they had known they would have said no, and I don't understand.

DP: In the beginning, if we had invited them 'come and plant in this plot, which is made out of pallets' they would have said 'no, why should we do this.' Little by little a world has been constructed in which they took part and in which they contributed somehow to this magic..

SV: Its too much to see the whole thing in one go, you need to see it...

DP: and participate in its construction, yes. So maybe this set of rules that we were speaking about has to be constructed and negotiated collectively. Instead of imposing, 'this is a dog...'

AQ: This seems to be the most difficult thing to combine with the way of making architecture or spatial arrangements in the normative system, building authorisations and things like that. Discussing for instance making social housing this morning with...

DP: the guy who kept you to be late here! [laughs]

AQ: No the one before! Patrick Bouchain. It's the main problem because in fact he says, that it seems that its only in cultural schemes, making cultural equipment together, that you have this ability to go by successive piece. But if you say for instance I want to build housing you are obliged to give all the schemes complete to have it controlled and everything like that.

NL: There is also the regulation on the use of materials, part of the reason with Village Underground we took a different route.

DP: He has a project there, you should explain...

NL: I worked on a project converting tube carriages into artist studios, and in this experience there is some parallel with what you are saying, where as an architect I designed not a finished scheme but a direction or an intention, and at every stage the project changed, because we were making the project only out of things we could find. So for example one set of spaces were designed with a wooden wall

and it turned out to be polycarbonate. Also, drawings showed tube carriages of a certain length 16m, but they weren't the ones we got in reality which were 18m, so we had to change in an instant the whole project. And there is an element of magic there because in fact it made the project better and come to life. We had to change all the access, how spaces related, but it worked out better than I could imagine.

DP: But because it had come to life as you say. I mean because you took life data somehow seriously, and they have started to draw your project, instead of abstract...

NL: I think as well, its not only the transformation of the space, but also the architect

AQ: Yes

NL: And it changed me very much as a person, and knowing how to transform space for other people.

AQ: Ok, but what I wanted to say is that this transformation cannot be done on paper and by speaking...

NL: What you say about the needs of regulations is very important because you can't tell them "oh we're going to do something sort of like this, and we'll see how it turns out." They won't accept that. Perhaps there is a way to work with authorities, where some elements are fixed, or some elements of freedom?

DP: Somehow, this is what I have understood that Bouchain wants, there are these specific areas in urban planning that have certain qualities attached to it and there could be areas that could be allowed for non-standard regulations. So where you can have exception to the normal regulation that are regulating the whole area and I think this is quite an interesting concept.

AQ: but you must be the owner of the land, it's the condition, it's the main one, after you have some problems.

DP: But what he wants to do is to keep it as public ownership...

AQ: No.

DP: No?

AQ: No, he has created a society to be a private owner with social housing rules.

DP: So this is what he has found. But in his society I think that the state play also, or the city is part of it. No?

AQ: No

DP: So he will be more or less the owner, who owns the space. At least what he has negotiated is a long term lease or

AQ: A long term lease with the city of Marseilles.

DP: So, a long term lease for 1 Euro or something. So somehow the law of ownership has in this case been interpreted.

NL: I think it's a good way of working. Where the property remains in 'public' ownership and you can make a use for it for a period of time. And maybe nothing wrong with thinking of investment in these terms. If you have opportunity to lease for 25 years and it pays back in this time...

AQ: His idea was that, well he has got the property to his society which is a cooperative society of cultural interest, and the idea is in Marseilles, to build one or several places like *Le Lieu Unique* in Nantes, in which there will not be only culture but some culture and housing for people participating in the culture but also inventing rules for people who will buy their plot. To be able to be resell if they want to go and with rules preventing gentrification. It's a complete new scheme to invent and very

near the first social housing in France in fact. Of the late 19th Century beginning of the 20th in which you had this kind of property of temporary property and people are not authorised to sell in a speculative manner.

NL: But there must be regulation for the prices you sell back? That's one of the problems we have in England with the purchase of affordable housing which gets re-sold at market value.

AQ: the idea is not ready. But that is why it must be resold to society and society re... not sell but sell the right to live in for a while. Because you see in the French system when you rent you are not authorised at all to touch the setting. When you buy you are authorised. So it is important to give people this kind of property right for them to be able to inhabit their housing.

DP: There are other things we can discuss about this, one is that he wants to create precedents for jurisprudence for other initiatives that could refer back to this as a law case lets say. So he wants to create the law condition in which others can do this. The second thing is about this relationship with the cultural institution because he wants to think about this process and to host the process within a cultural institution. All the sessions, all the constructions will be a cultural act and I think that this is interesting because he brings culture in construction or in building. He has done previously with the others, all of his precedents were public spaces and the construction site was open.

SV: Yes, the one I saw where the site was open to the public

DP: And there is relationship with the clients at least, the neighbourhood and the construction team. So the whole process became public more or less. And it was his understanding of what is the role of a public institution

AQ: Its not so true. The relations of the neighbourhood in all the places I know isn't good at all...

DP: Well, at least he claimed this...

AQ: He claims, but he doesn't manage to do it

DP: yes, I agree with this

AQ: it's a cultural object for cultural classes completely cut from the surroundings. So he is open and its possible to work with, has good ideas, has good practices. I think he's somebody who hasn't his diploma in architecture, so he always worked salaried for other people, and he came very late as somebody acting for himself in collective society. It's a new thing. And so, as very often the people who are quite good in architectural ideas but didn't get the diplomas they are not so respectful of the rules. I know several of those its very interesting!

[laughs]

DP: Which makes at the end their big strength! But I think that you're right I mean if there is something to criticise, it's the fact that he is really working with institutions, and doesn't go further than this. Somehow the participatory aspect is controlled by the institution and is staged by the institution. He's provoking it, and he gives... I mean through the way he is doing architecture he gives space to it, but he really doesn't bother about the users at the end.

AQ: Well, it is done with the inside users but not at all with the neighbourhoods.

DP: Because he has done in this way, I think he was very good in getting the institution on his side, which is also an interesting thing in a country where the state is still very important.

AQ: It's the problem of the cultural field, what we saw yesterday is another story, but those people they had the institution for them, paying for a lot of things, some very nice, some useful. But it's the cultural ministry the culture of Paris, because during the 80s and the beginning of this century we had a sort of a ... France was very backward in relation to contemporary art etc. and as soon as the regions

and the commune became more autonomous by the law, they invested a lot of money in all cities, in cultural activities, cultural equipments, and so it was really a great opportunity for cultural people.

...And he is a good friend of Jack Lang.

DP: Because doing this laboratory, the first session, where Anne was there also, after this week we questioned where we are in this, if we compare our approach to his approach and it was clear that he is doing a top-down approach. So there is no doubt about this, he is working with power and he is pushing power to redefine their means or whatever. And we are working the other way around and we are contested by power all the time. We are working with small people in the hierarchy that have, here and there, a position that would allow them, like in St Blaise it was this woman working in this regeneration programme that was open enough to invite us and to find money that covered a bit, I don't know 60%, maybe, of our investment there. But it's a long process, it's a bottom up process which takes a lot of energy and every gesture is just, very difficult.

AQ: but also, re-reading a little Starhawk, I think the challenge for all of us is to live well in what we do. And if we are at the bottom and it is nice to speak to the guy from Pakistan, from Russia, from... and do something with this person, its ok, I think from the bottom we can't do and change everything.

DP: You can't change the law from the bottom, as he [Bouchain] wants to. But yes, you can change other things. And you have another perception of the world which is much richer.

AQ: In Patrick Bouchain, he says in this meeting, that it was a personal *vengeance* or something like that, against the architectural establishment in which he was taught, because at the very time he was a student with Castro, all the famous French. At the time the left students came in saying we don't want to build palaces any more, we want to build housing. And he said that all those people wanted to build houses and accepted all the norms and rules of the state and he wouldn't. All those people have built now for 40-50 years with the rules of the state, it's a national mess in a way...

DP: Yes, all the suburbs are built by these people, after '68 they went in power. They had all commissions, people like Castro. They have built hundreds of thousands of flats.

AQ: And so he wants to show that building without these rules, for which he didn't get his diploma, is better. So it's a personal, political... But its quite interesting, it's a motor, a driver.

NL: He's also using culture as a driver. I think its interesting to understand what is meant by culture. Very often its linked to arts or creative arts but its more than this. Locally in London, the boroughs each interpret this differently, in Tower Hamlets for example their strategy doesn't talk about art, but about people and communities of people, particularly minorities living there and their ways of living.

SV: Guattari speaks of three different types of culture. He calls them A, B and C... Value culture and... I can't remember the other terms!

AQ: I don't remember this...

The first idea of Bouchain it is at the moment there is two realms in which the norms, people accept the norms not to be a horrible building and... its culture and also nomadic areas, areas for nomadic people. But elsewhere any owner will ask for the norms to have a volume,

DP: But there is another exception and I can speak about it because we were doing this somehow at St Blaise, its to invent programmes that doesn't exist. So they don't have norms because nobody can say what they are. And somehow what seems like a problem for us when somebody asks "but what is this?" and you would start to say "its something like a ..., and something like a ... but it could be also this..." Then it becomes something which is not completely tangible and normative.

SV: The expectation from the norms drop away...

DP: Yes so we were able to have dry public toilet which...

AQ: Which does not work!

DP: It works!

KT: It works too well, as its full.

[laughs]

DP: Exactly! It works too well. What doesn't work, is that we don't have enough energy to supply everything that would make it work...

So you can invent something that doesn't exist and make it pass through. For example the space which is suspended, we saw it as a greenhouse as something which has no public access, but then you can read in a green house, or you can do things in a green house.

AQ: Yes a greenhouse is a good project.

SV: You could use the norms as a tactic...

AQ: Its possible... sometimes!

DP: But I think that this is also a kind of inventing new programmes, that could be *that* and *that* but they are neither *that* nor *that*. The only thing is maybe we don't know yet how long we can 'sell' it, but maybe time is important, you are winning time to for example get a neighbourhood to accept this space and then fight for it, which was a little bit the case at EcoBox. So they enjoyed so much the garden that now they are fighting for having another space for it. Which was not possible, I mean when we have started nobody had an idea about what could be a garden that they would be interested in.

SV: In terms of the norms and regulations, is there anything you [anne] can say about the slums or self-managed spaces outside the regulations

AQ: There are some, but very little

SV: As an alternative housing?

AQ: You have for instance Romanian people along the roads, along the highways, you have some metres, I don't know how many, left free. And you have people there at the moment in slums. But we used to have a lot of slums before '75, and there was a big campaign destroying every of those

DP: *Bidonville*

AQ: Yes, putting people in new social housing estates. To my eyes, except those Romanian skilley persons, the most interesting development at the moment, in poor development is that of the camping. Not in the Roma areas because the Romanian people, I learnt with Bouchain I don't think they count as "French" and so there are specific rules for those populations, and they are a big community. But on the other camping places, where they are not accepted and they are not allowed to stay more than x days. But at the moment some do because they have not been obliged to move. What Bouchain was saying was about going back to a new kind of slums, but he is building housing illegally on private property. The problem of slums everywhere in the world is the land, its not the slums, if the owner of the land wants the land back, then the state comes and push the people outside. If the people ask for water and sewage, if the owner of the land doesn't want to pay, then its like that and its always around the land and not the architecture.

SV: so it could change very quickly if the ownership of the land changes.

AQ: If a landowner, completely equipped with water, electricity and sewage is ok to welcome, maybe ten families on his land, and pay for all the services for ten families and all the taxes and

everything. But this very charitable person or organisation nobody knows! Bouchain says for instance, the circus Zingaro by Bartabas.

DP: there is a famous circus with horses

AQ: yes, in this circus, there are ten houses, which have been made like the horse houses a little, illegally, in the park of Versailles, he has done this tour because there is an academy for horse management done by the same person, and they have made housing on the border of that illegally, again, but its linked with the academy

DP: So, it has a certain status and that's why it was possible. Because it was overlooked somehow, by the authority, because it was under the umbrella of the circus. As a circus you are allowed to do weird things!

AQ: Also, you have these places in Versailles, for horses which have never been used for years, or by the school of architecture and people, and were afraid that people were going to squat. And this guy says I am going to make an academy for horses, using the same thing, going back to the king's time! In France the regulations for housing are very strict. You can't do housing like that. And it's important to understand why. It's a political and economic project, people buying housing, making money for the bank system. And the housing to contribute to the banking system has to be very standardised for the speculation, to be done on paper not on building. And all the system is supposed to be done by people who are not living in the housing created by them. Renting it to others. It is this very segment of the market that is going down, but the state has already bought back 30,000 of those!

DP: As Brian said yesterday, because of this financial crisis, which we will be faced with in the next years, there is place for invention, and I think the rules have to be revised. We will be forced to revise them.

AQ: And what I think is important in this magic thinking, about rules, is to have your project first, not looking at rules, and after to read the rules, and see what is ok, what is not ok but could be perhaps negotiated. And then it creates a space to do things. And using of course the experiences of other people to know about these things quickly.

DP: For this, I think we have to think with the body. We have to think with the heart. With other things than just your mind. To somehow change your practice, maybe to experience... and this was one of your questions, we are speaking about it but we are not experiencing it. I learnt a lot by experiencing, my projects for example, being involved and living them. I see for example lots of people who look like they are doing the same things that we are doing, but they are just projects, they are just ideas about, which are nice and nice to speak about. But we know how difficult it is! To really achieve, whatever you might want, about community about the project. To push it further, what this means, and what type of practice you have to have. I think then it becomes interesting and then you can speak about another way of thinking. Magic for example.

AQ: About what you said about the non-defined programme. I think working by the grassroots, but also by top-down, the first thing is to be in a place. For any reason, personal or it has been given to you. And then really to work from this place; to know the surroundings, the people, create the network, the group driving the thing. This is very important. Not making the models... but then making models in the material sense can also be interesting! For instance, in the 13^e arrondissement, there had been students in architecture, who had made a model of the neighbourhood, with a different colour for all the housing that was going to be destroyed by the plan of the municipalit e, and we exhibited the model and the people from the neighbourhood came and said "oh! what is this? This is going to be

destroyed? Its my house. No, I don't agree with this plan!" It was very funny because all those people agreed that part of the neighbourhood should be destroyed because it was in a bad state, part should be destroyed to create new, modern, social housing, and in front of the model, they were all pushing the destroyed bit somewhere else. And so said look we have to think something different! [laughs] And it is the difficult thing in Bouchain's work, because what local group to think with?

DP: Well he takes as local groups, the cultural institutions. I think the people that are working in the cultural institution.

AQ: Yes, but the problem is, sociological studies prove that those people generally have better salaries than the people around.

DP: Yes of course.

AQ: And if you don't find a way of driving in people from around, from working class or other ethnicities, to discuss the project, to live in, you create gentrification. And all local project, made that because they didn't think their relations to the persons around.

KT: I think what you said about the model is important, it's a tangible way to make something visible. Particularly unspoken, or otherwise unknown things, plans, about a locality. It is quite hard work often to find out who is proposing what. And so finding ways to make things more publicly known...

DP: Yes, models or something else, there are always devices, something that can become at catalyst

AQ: I have another story about models. It happened it Corsica, in a school. In this school, a painter which is now a director of Picasso museum, she made a little action research about the way children look at space. So she made the following proposal the children of the form CM2 (which is the last class of primary school in France- children are about 10). So the form is divided into three groups, the good pupils, the average, and the bad pupils, and these three groups are asked to make a model of heir neighbourhood. The painter goes with the bad pupils to help them, because they are not good, the teacher goes with the average ones, the husband of the painter goes with the other ones. The good and the average ones, made a copy of the existing neighbourhood, which was a horrible, ugly social housing estate. So the good ones, made the good proportions, of metres, of everything exactly, and the average was not so good, but the same, and the bad pupils asked the painter 'are we authorised to do what we want?'... 'yes'... 'ah then madame, here there was a prehistoric *grotte* in former days, so we want to put this prehistoric *grotte*, a cave, there. Then by the sea, there was a lighthouse in former days, we want to put the lighthouse...' and all the things which have existed sometime...

DP: ... that they had knowledge about

AQ: yes, that they knew about, went on the model, and the painter put a lamp and glaze on the *grotte* and it was a marvellous model. And the good and the average were so displeased with that! And they destroyed the nice model at playtime. (laughs) and everything was reversed.

DP: this comes back to the idea of knowledge of different kinds, that all kinds of knowledge are useful...

AQ: And all time, you see the prehistoric... you see we live in what the Americans would call *ici* and *maintenant*, the here and now. And all the system of the scientific... is to make us live in the here and now, without any past and without any future...

NL: but also dealing with the real. I remember reading Ben Okri, and there he's describing an environment in Africa where the spiritual and the real live together at the same time, and as you read you lose whether something is 'real' or 'spiritual' to make you realise that the spiritual is very much part of the real. There is a blurring of these boundaries which I think is something to think about, in terms of what do you accept as your environment or what drives you to consider the acceptable. Maybe how you push your boundaries of design. For example a feature you would recognise normally becomes transformed to something else, a staircase, a door...

KT: I think there has to be an openness to suggestion as well, how not to dismiss something as imaginary or 'just a story' or a myth, so how can you be open? Because when Doina has first mentioned the word magic, my first reaction was to laugh. And I didn't really understand what this magic would be about. And also I feel quite shocked at my own response- that I would dismiss something that I didn't know about- because that's what laughter is, to dismiss something...

DP: And it [magic] would never have come back if somebody else hadn't said 'well I am interested in this!' I think that you have transcribed it very quickly, after the discussion and just says "Doina mentioned magic" and then pass to something else. And somebody else, the person who was invited, [Ruth] said in an email exchange, 'well I am very interested in this!' and so it came back somehow as a question but otherwise it would have passed.

I think when you mention this coexistence of different spaces, lets say a spiritual space and a physical space, 'real' space, I think, well there are people who don't have spiritual spaces but they have other types of spaces,

AQ: not the spiritual or religious, but...

DP: they could be affective spaces, they could be emotional spaces, they could be social spaces, these are all already always there and could be considered.

SV: I think that talks about pleasure as well, and of acceptance. And that might be related to the future or the past emotionally. Being rather than having

AQ: Also, linked with both, with existing architects, my age or older than me, but the ones I know. It seems to me very often the architects are people who have had a great emotions in front of Greek temples, or Casbah, or whatever, and those people they have this form in front of which they had great emotions, and they transfer this form on whatever they produce. And they cut the form, which is a link between spiritual and material, in the culture in which it has been erected, they cut it from this link, to take it as a good form, to give to anything they will do afterwards. I am not an architecture student so I don't know if it is taught like this in some schools, but what is this thing- you see forms (and ordinary people also perhaps) are the first move to good forms. But when you do participatory work, and work with people several times, this sticking to good forms, or good objects, good ideas this can move. But it is a very difficult subject. And there is a second problem, in participation, we mentioned it perhaps yesterday already, that architects who make projects with people, some of them have a tendency, when those are poor people who have their own experience, of space forms, which is for instance working class housing, so they have experience of 'good' or the form they have lived in. And urbanists, sociologists, I don't speak of architects, people organising participation, take for granted the forms, that people, and these forms can be put in a new society, put in a new setting can be completely non-productive, or productive in a gentrifying scheme. And so there must be, about what you said, about the link between material and spiritual, there must be a great work for the architect

themselves and also with people to look at different things and to create the belief that you can do something about it, that you are not obliged to repeat forms, or 'good' forms.

DP: I think that this is very important, to allow this space for transformation, or creative transformation, in which a person can do something which they have never imagined somehow, or can discover it through the process and can reinvent

NL: I think we can be open somehow to others views, because somebody who would feel limited that way is probably limited by a lack of understanding of some of the preconditions that we are trained to see and recognise. But if you direct these thoughts or spatial relationships, then it can be more open for us to interpret...

DP: But I think this should go in all directions, its about architects as well, we also have a preconception of what is the good form and its good to be open as well and to not know yet what kind of architecture you will obtain at the end, and how it should look like

NL: I feel very strongly about my experience with Village Underground, and having to change constantly, every time something happens I had to change the design or even stop the design and let things happen, and we are trained so much in detailing everything, door handles, everything, we have some much precondition, ideas of design that will kill that kind of creativity. I think you have to step back from it, and let things happen.

AQ: You cannot have everything in control, but, on the other hand you have to be what American's call non-directive. Because non-directive, its something which has the implicit hypothesis that the global rule is solving everything. So you must make input in the situation, not controlling...

SV: But that misunderstanding generated problems in the UK in community architecture, where the architect was absolved of any influence, that you just 'go off and design your own housing' so the resident was disempowered who did not have the skills to design their own house, or the space to imagine what it could be, and the architect was disempowered at the same time. The movement ended up being put forward as an apolitical movement, that wasn't about social-political issues, but was taken up by the right wing Thatcher government.

DP: I think that there could be moments in which the inhabitant can, it was interesting at the last theory forum we have organised which was about alternative practices in architecture, there were a few speakers, one speaker speaking about, she was a bit nostalgic about the fact that the architect has nothing to do with people doing extensions and they don't need architects and they don't need architects anymore. So she was a little bit concerned that this is a domain that escapes us, and questions architecture. And somebody else commented that he is very happy that they don't ask him to do extensions, this type of work. And there was another one showing his projects that were extensions to peoples houses- highly designed, so it was very contradictory somehow. And there were a few people from Brasilia working in favelas, researching what the architect can do in favelas and it was a sensitive thing which was about analysing situations in which the architect should intervene, or not. And they analysed for example the case somebody who came and had the skills, because he came from construction background, to build, and what he needed was not help for construction but some help for administration, for other things. So he didn't need any help, and there were others who would need some help, with structure, because the houses were not stable enough. So they are analysing on a case by case, situation by situation, I think we should allow moments in which the architect could be absent, there is no rule, that we can say the architect is always to have an input or to stay aside

SV: it should be responsive, this is the problem of stages of work and very proscribed ways of being an architect, you start at 'A' and do these set tasks,

NL: yes and the level of design and drawing you do at each stage. Maybe the architect is not absent, but the level of involvement changes throughout the process

DP: and where. Because I think that our knowledge goes beyond just knowledge of design,

NL: At the beginning I had difficulty in understanding participation and design, because I was thinking well, if people do their own design, why am I here? Over time, I began to understand the assistance we can provide, there is still a whole realm of design that needs to be done, you still have a responsibility in the process.

We stop here. And Doina makes lunch for everybody :o)

Some of the references...

EcoBox Project: <http://www.urbantactics.org>

Village Underground: <http://www.villageunderground.co.uk/>

Starhawk: <http://www.starhawk.org/>

Patrick Bouchain: "Construire autrement : Comment faire ?"