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“ARCHITECTURE AS THE IDEOLOGY OF THE PLAN” REVISITING MANFREDO TAFURI'S CRITIQUE OF IDEOLOGY

Abstract | This paper revisits one of the key writings on ideology in architecture, Manfredo Tafuri's «Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology», published 1969 in *Contropiano*. In the essay Tafuri analyses the integration of architectural ideology - 'project' and 'utopia' - into state ideology, its move from superstructure to base. For him «Architecture as the *ideology of the Plan* is swept away by the *reality of the Plan* at the moment the plan came down from the utopian level and became an operant mechanism.»

Tafuri's essay was also a comment on Antonio Negri's «Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State post-1929», published the year before. According to Negri the economic crisis of 1929 had destroyed confidence in the future. As a consequence, in John Maynard Keynes' economic theory, the state was «to remove fear of the future», to eliminate its *risk* and uncertainty. The cure was to project the future according to present expectations, what Negri described as «the state as *the plan*».

For Tafuri though «It is significant that almost all the economic objectives formulated by Keynes in his *General Theory* can be found, in purely ideological form, at the basis of the poetics of modern architecture.» It was architecture that aimed at the reorganization of production, distribution and consumption in the capitalist city. While his 'critique of ideology' is often discussed, the specific notion of 'architecture as the *ideology of the Plan*' remains largely overlooked.

The paper clarifies Tafuri's critique of ideology, drawing attention to the 'plan' as specific form of representation, organization and administration. It situates the essay within the political context of Workersim and their slogan «contro il piano», against the plan. It will finally test Tafuri's argument by looking closely at the reality of an earlier example of that history, the 1862 building plan for Berlin.

Keywords | Manfredo Tafuri, critique of ideology, plan, Workerism, economic theory

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper revisits Manfredo Tafuri's critique of architectural ideology as the ideology of the plan. It is part of my PhD research into the notion of the plan in the German-speaking world in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century. [1] My research investigates the plan as a specific medium and cultural technique that established a unique way of administering various entities; such as the city, the factory and the society.

1.1. Aims and objectives

Much has been said about Tafuri's critique of ideology before. There are two main readings, one through Fredric Jameson's critique of Tafuri and the other through Italian workerism. While the first, more theoretical, places Tafuri's position within a wider discussion of ideology, the second, more political, understands his early writings more specifically within its historical context. I have found the second more useful.

The aim of the paper is not to go through these readings again but to highlight one key aspect: the plan. While Tafuri's critique of ideology has been widely discussed, his specific notion of 'architecture as the *ideology of the Plan*' remains often unnoticed. It was only Gail Day who recently described Tafuri as «workerist historian and theorist of the Metropolis and the Plan.» She argues that «it is the notion of the 'Plan' – central to Tafuri's writing throughout the 1970s – that best situates Tafuri's argument within the workerist political frame.» [2] Correspondingly it could be argued that it is the workerist political frame that best allows us to understand Tafuri's argument in that period. The paper aims to clarify Tafuri's critique of ideology, by drawing attention to the plan as specific form of representation, organization and administration. It consequently situates the essay within the political context of Italian workerism and their slogan «contro il piano», against the plan.

1.2. Contropiano: Materiali marxisti

This paper is based on the reading of one of the key writings on ideology in architecture, Manfredo Tafuri's *Architecture and Utopia* (1973). [3] The book is a combination and extension of two earlier articles, published in the Italian journal *Contropiano: Materiali marxisti* edited by Alberto Asor Rosa and Massimo Cacciari. The first, Tafuri's seminal «Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology», was published in 1969. [4] Parts of the second article, «Intellectual Work and Capitalist Development», published in a later issues of the same journal, formed the chapter of the book on ideology and utopia. [5] It were only the last two chapters, reflecting on the contemporary situation, that were specifically written for the book. [6]

The articles were published in a magazine that already had the 'plan' in the title. «*Contropiano* combines 'piano', referring to an architectural or urban plan and to the plan of future action, while 'contro' implies movement against the plan.» [7] According to Day «*Contropiano's* editors were against capitalism's 'Plan', but now understood their political task to be the construction of an alternative or counter-plan.» [8] Asor Rosa described the two lines of research of the journal as «the analysis of the questions to do with class struggle, (...), and on the other hand, the analysis of the ideal and cultural superstructures of capitalist mass society.» [9] He also states a strong interest of the journal in the subject of intellectual work.

2. ARCHITECTURAL IDEOLOGY AND CAPITALIST DEVELOPEMENT

Tafuri's writings confront the subject of architectural ideology and specifically investigate the relationship between architectural and capitalist ideology, between intellectual work and capitalist development. [10] For him ideology is being produced by intellectual work. Tafuri critiques the architectural ideology of the modern movement as an ideological instrument of capital. He identifies three phases: first the formation of urban ideology, second the transference of ideological projects from the artistic to the architectural avant-gardes for their concrete realization, and third the formation of architectural ideology as the '*ideology of the Plan*'.

3. DIFFERENT NOTIONS OF THE PLAN

The paper will draw out the distinct notions of the plan related to each of these phases, of which the most important distinction is between the plan for the reform of the city and the plan for the reorganization of production. It will describe their specificity, their relation and the movement between them.

3.1. Plan for the reform of the city

The first notion of the plan in Tafuri's book is that of a drawing according to which a city should be built. This notion was drawn from Marc-Antoine Laugier's *Observations sur l'architecture* (1765), in which the French enlightenment thinker, among other things, formulated his theories of the design of the city. According to Tafuri these theories in turn might have been modelled on Pier Patte's «Partie du plan general de Paris», a plan that brought together all the projects of the competition for the design of a new royal square for a statue of Louis XV and various other proposals for the embellishment of Paris. The drawing was first published in Pierre Patte's *Monuments érigés à la gloire de Louis XV* (1765). Beyond Patte's plan of Paris (1765), Tafuri refers to L'Enfant's plan for Washington (1791), the Napoleonic plan for Milan (1807), Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin* for Paris (1925), Cornelis van Eesteren's plan for Amsterdam (1929), and most prominently Le Corbusier's *Plan Obus* for Algiers (1932).

3.1.1. The urban ideology as veil

With the first notion of the plan comes also the first notion of ideology. Laugier's theory of the city as a forest, according to Tafuri, was an attempt to hide rather than to emphasize the actual contradictions of the city. He described the idea as a «sublimation of physiocratic theories». For Tafuri the enlightenment theorist would not interpret the city as a structure that transformed land exploitation, land development, and the form of economic accumulation, but described it as nature. Consequently his theory of the city did not highlight the capitalist exploitation of land in the city, which was in contradiction with the older agricultural exploitation of land, but naturalized it. For Tafuri the actual dichotomy between urban and rural reality would only be covered up by theorizing the city as nature, an example of the abstraction of theory as a veil. That for him established a first ideological role for intellectual work, the artistic activity as an ideological smokescreen. For Tafuri architectural ideology became an ideological instrument of capital by hiding the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist city.

3.2. Plan for the reorganization of building production

The second notion of the plan in Tafuri's book is that of a project for the reorganization of the production, distribution and consumption in the capitalist city. He argues that first as intellectuals and then as civil servants the historical avant-gardes tried to develop techniques to control and direct the structure of capitalist development, to organize the cycle of production in the city. For Tafuri the history of the architectural avant-garde is the history of that project and Ludwig Hilberseimer one of his most explicit examples.

In the book *Grossstadtarchitektur* (1927) Hilberseimer claimed that the lack of a plan is one of the characteristics of capitalism. For him this was represented in the development of the capitalist city, which, according to Hilberseimer, was growing without a plan. He was arguing that the main characteristic of the metropolis was its disorganisation. In contrast to the factory, where the principle of the division of labour organised everything according to plan, the city was very chaotic. Hilberseimer was therefore demanding that the metropolis of the future, in analogy to the factory, had to be organized according to a plan. He was further claiming that the chaos of the present day metropolis could only be confronted with theoretical models. For him the task of the architectural intellectuals was to develop pure principles of building the city. According to Tafuri, Hilberseimer was suggesting that with the new capitalist modes of production the architect as designer of specific objects, as someone who was giving form to the architecture of the city, had become obsolete. Instead the only suitable role for an architect would be that of the organizer of the cycle of production within the city. [11]

3.3. Plan for the reorganization of capitalism

Tafuri's critique of architectural ideology was part of a wider discussion on the plan as a means for the reorganization of capitalism. This last notion of the plan is not explicit in Tafuri's «Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology», but becomes clearer in *Architecture and Utopia* (1976). This notion of the plan as a project of development is also something not explicitly referred to but something more implicit in architectural ideology. For Tafuri, it was this inherent utopia of the architectural project, its characteristic to project the future from the present, which was being institutionalized as the plan of development.

In his book Tafuri analyses the integration of this characteristic of architectural ideology, of the project and utopia, into state ideology, its move from superstructure to base. The contemporary example he is referring to is *Progetto 80*, «a report on the economic and urban situation in Italy, and on the possibilities of development by 1980, prepared by a team of economists and town planners in 1968-1969 for the Ministry of Development.» [12] It is this understanding of the plan as political institution, as a plan for capitalist development, that was central to the contemporary class struggle of Italian workers and the political discourse of Italian workerism. We therefore need to understand the particular notions of the plan of some of the protagonists of this political discourse to better understand Tafuri's notion of the '*ideology of the Plan*'.

3.3.1. Tronti's 'plan of capital'

It can for instance be argued that Tafuri's understanding of the plan is indebted to Mario Tronti's 'plan of capital'. [13] For Tronti the 'plan of capital' was a consequence of the socialization of capital, of social capital. He writes: «True, at this point there is no longer capitalist development without a capitalist plan. But there cannot be a plan of capital without social capital. It is the capitalist society that, by itself, programs its own development. And this is precisely democratic planning.» [14] With the social organization of production and the new form and function of the state in the democratic planning of economy, the 'plan of capital' became the political institution for the self-organization and self-government of capital.

For Tronti the 'plan of capital' came primarily about from the necessity of making the working class function as labour power within social capital. He argued that as a consequence of the expansion of capitalist relations of production from the factory over all of society, that what happened on an individual level, that the worker confronts the capitalist in the factory, was to be replicated on a social level, on the level of class. He writes: «It is an objective requirement of capitalist production, on the level of social capital, to recuperate a real general terrain of the class-struggle. In fact, only through this recuperation can the class-struggle be consciously regulated and organized within the plan of capital.» [15] The 'plan of capital' was to utilize the negativity of the class-struggle of the working class as dynamic force for capitalist development. According to Tronti it was their demands that required constant adjustment of capitalism and hence the capitalist reform of the state.

3.3.2. Negri's 'state as the plan'

Tafuri's understanding of the plan was also based on his reading of Toni Negri's «Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State post-1929», published in the first ever edition of *Contropiano* in 1968. [16] The text was an investigation of the reform of the capitalist state through John Maynard Keynes' *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936). According to Negri the economic crisis of 1929 had «destroyed confidence and certainty in the future, has destroyed capital's fundamental convention that results and consequences must match up the expectations.» [17] As a consequence, in Keynes' economic theory, the state had to take a new role and form. It was «to remove fear of the future», to eliminate its *risk* and uncertainty. The cure for crisis was to project the future according to present expectations, what Negri described as «*the state as planner*, or better still, the state as *the plan*». [18] He writes: «And if the only way to do this is to project the future from within the present, to plan the future according to present expectations, then the state must extend its intervention to take up the role of the planner, and the economic thus becomes incorporated in the juridical.» [19]

Negri further identifies two elements of state intervention in Keynes' theory. The first element is the establishment of a reference point for development, a plan for development. The new role of the state is to eliminate the risk of investment or to reduce it to the convention. For him the state

must take on the function of guaranteeing the basic convention of economics, the return of investment. He explains that: «In its intervention, the state will act according to a series of norms; it will dictate what is to be. It will not guarantee the certainty of future events, but it will guarantee the certainty of convention; it will seek the certainty of the present projected into the future.» [20] The second element of state intervention goes beyond the first one. Here it is no longer sufficient for the state to guarantee the fundamental economic convention that links present and future, but the state has to become an economic structure itself. The state has to organize investment as exclusive collective representative of 'social capital'. The new form of the state is that of a productive subject, as an administrative centre for all economic activity.

4. THE 'IDEOLOGY OF THE PLAN' AS ANTICIPATION

After that it seems clear that there are at least two main notions of the plan in Tafuri's writings. The first, being the traditional urban plan, probably does not need much further explanation. The second, the plan for the organization of production, seems to be indebted to the political discourse of Italian workerism, specific to its time and in need of some more understanding. It therefore seems useful for future discussions to distinguish between the plan and the Plan, the first being the urban and the second the plan as political institution. The city as the site of the production of the built environment established the relation between the question of the form of the city and the organization of production, between the urban plan and the plan for the organization of capitalist building production.

The urban plan, according to Tafuri, moderated the relation between architecture and the city and therefore linked architecture to the destiny of the city. However, in capitalism the traditional urban plan as the means to determine the urban morphology was no longer sufficient to give form to the chaos of the city. Hence what was required was a different kind of plan, a plan that also organized building production. But the plan for building production could not be realized without the '*state as the plan*', without a 'plan of capital'. Therefore architectural ideology became the 'ideology of the Plan'. It now should be clear that architectural ideology as the '*ideology of the Plan*' refers not to the urban plan but to the economic plan. Form could be given to the city only by the control and organization of production, that means: by the Plan.

For Tafuri the '*ideology of the Plan*' formulated by the architectural and urban theorists of the historical avant-gardes pointed toward a 'plan of capital', toward a plan for the organization of production on the level of social capital, toward a plan of development. That for him established a second ideological role for intellectual work, the artistic activity as ideological anticipation and innovation of capitalist ideology. For Tafuri architectural ideology became an ideological instrument of capital by theorizing and demanding a role for the state in the control of capital.

5. CONCLUSION

For Tafuri «It is significant that almost all the economic objectives formulated by Keynes in his *General Theory* can be found, in purely ideological form, at the basis of the poetics of modern architecture.» For him it was the ideology of the historical avant-gardes, the '*ideology of the Plan*' that first aimed at the reorganization of production, distribution and consumption of the capitalist city. Following Negri's interpretation, for Tafuri the foundation of Keynesian interventionism was the same as that of the poetics of modern architecture. «To free oneself from the fear of the future by eyeing the future as present.» [21]

5.1. From subject to object of Plan

For Tafuri, the paradox and tragedy of the '*ideology of the Plan*' was that, «once the Plan came within scope of the general reorganization of production, architecture and urban planning would become its objects not its subject.» [22] The problem lay in the fact that the '*ideology of the Plan*' could not be realized in building production only, but that the true Plan could only take shape beyond this sector, with the reform of the role of the state for capitalist development.

For Tafuri therefore «Architecture as the *ideology of the Plan* is swept away by the *reality of the Plan* at the moment the plan came down from the utopian level and became an operant mechanism.» [23] This for him marked the beginning of the crisis of the architectural ideology of the modern movement and hence also of modern architecture.

5.2. The crisis of architectural ideology

The crisis of modern architecture, according to Tafuri, is a crisis of the ideological function of architecture. He writes: «The crisis of modern architecture begins at the precise moment when its natural target – large industrial capital – makes architecture's underlying ideology its own, setting aside the superstructures. As of that moment architectural ideology has exhausted its own function.» [24] For Tafuri, following Negri's reading of the capitalist reform of the state, that moment began 1929 with the states intervention in the organization of economic development. The roles that had been claimed by the architectural avant-garde, to project the future from the present and to organize the economic cycle, were taken over by capital. The consequences for architecture according to Tafuri were clear. He did «see architecture obliged to return to *pure architecture*, to form without utopia; in the best cases, to sublime uselessness.» [25] Therefore any intellectual illusions, such as the ideology of 'counter-design', were to be critiqued. For Tafuri no 'controspazio' was possible. What was required was a 'contropiano'. The Plan, not design was the site of the political struggle in Italy at the time.

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