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## *An Archaeology of the Future*

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For the first time in a very long time, architecture once again finds itself with a remit that goes beyond providing people with airports, schools, reasonably pleasant public spaces, and homes based on tried-and-tested templates. Over the coming years and decades, an unknown number of people are expected to migrate to the world's major conurbations – and will want to live there. According to a UNESCO study, around one billion people will swell the ranks of those who live on the already overfilled outskirts of major cities. We have no idea how they will live. For ecological, social and economic reasons, the familiar typologies, i.e. high-rises, terraced houses, vast expanses of single-family dwellings or even slums, are not an option for them. So new typologies need to be found as social ritual and the way people work and live have changed fundamentally in result of the so-called technological revolution. These societies have long ceased to consist solely of single persons or nuclear families, the two main categories that still account for virtually all the homes now being built.

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Add to this the fact that automation and robotisation will destroy more jobs than they create (despite all the claims that full employment will still be possible in the future) and that this trend will also have far-reaching consequences for housing and for community life. The question of home life will become inseparably linked with the question of work – and not in the idyllic, backward-looking sense that both activities can be re-combined within a single building, as they might have been in mediaeval towns “in the old days”. Right now, the widely celebrated blurring of boundaries between working life and home life means that working life – i.e. being constantly reachable, being constantly on a laptop, answering emails at night – has engulfed home life, so much so that it's now hard to imagine home life beyond working

life. Whenever employers graciously offer their staff the opportunity to “work from home”, the emphasis clearly is on the word “work”. But what if vast numbers of low-skilled workers lose their jobs: What will they live off? In what sort of premises will their private and their public lives play out? And where will we find the models for a form of architecture whose spaces are able to respond to the fundamental new challenges and also enable other, less efficiency-controlled forms of our living together? Here, our view of things is automatically drawn back to the 1960s, to a time that was shaped by the pioneering spirit of the “Moon Age” and a flourishing consumer society, and that also managed to develop an awareness of ecological and social problems and work on political and architectural counter-models. Both – the expansive optimism and the ability to critique – are reflected in the architecture of the 1960s. 

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Countless coffee-table books on the architecture of the 1960s and '70s have been published since the turn of the millennium. In these books, the buildings of that particular period were often showcased as birds of paradise set in concrete, as wondrous beasts admired (with a hint of nostalgia) for their brash, loud colours, the way you might admire some bizarre 19th-century antique: “Unbelievable some of the stuff people came up with back then.” Brightly coloured 1960s furniture and lamps drifted into middle-class homes as interior décor, along with screen prints, an expression of the awareness that there had been a time when things were wild and progressive. The Sixties revolution became a style concept, with the uprising led by lamps and flokati rugs. The restoration of the Noughties aesthetically digested the symbols of political awakening that had characterised their parents' generation. 

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If you look at 1960s architecture today, it's easy to dismiss it out of hand as the crumbling remains of an unredeemed utopia of

late modernity. Many of those coffee-table books do just that, wallowing in a highly aestheticised “ruin romanticism” which, ultimately, merely reinforces the status quo. If the building utopias of yore are decaying so visibly, if the light from the faded plastic lamps of 1971 is glimmering so matt and milky, it’s quite all right to carry on as before. 

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And yet, that is impossible, for the reasons mentioned earlier. It’s also impossible to use the formulas of Haussmann’s Paris or Ebenezer Howard’s garden city to build for a billion inhabitants in the slums of megacities around the world. But if modernity is to be our antiquity, as documenta 12 posited in 2007, it means we must be able to find within its ruins formulas for the present and the future. 

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This book features the works of seven architects who built very different houses in the 1960s and 1970s. Each of these houses was an attempt to fundamentally rethink the notion of living, beyond the known categories and forms. Two of these architects died while the book was being put together. The others, with one exception, still live in these buildings, as if to prove that life within these often bizarre constructs is possible and, perhaps, even better than in ordinary houses; they have persisted with their utopias and demonstrate how compatible they are with everyday life. Meeting these architects was an opportunity to talk to them about the questions they themselves were asking at the time, and about the problems they had to contend with and were determined to solve. 

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It is astonishing how close this generation of architects was to solutions to questions that are today more pressing than ever: Why are there only two building typologies for human habitation: the “apartment”, usually designed around a family of four and more or less spacious depending on the household income, and the “detached house” out in suburbia? Why are there no

spaces keen to organise social life and co-habitation more openly, in networked residential units, along with the question of spatial and social interiors and exteriors? Would it be conceivable to re-think and re-work the seemingly obsolete idea of the kibbutz, but in an urbanised, less rural form? And where, now, is the thinking taking place about a new idea of intimate space and public space? Are there any experiments on living space now being conducted that offer alternatives to the economically determined desertification of that very space and form, spaces of collective politicisation? Could an idea of public spaces emerge that is not merely defined as an utterly commerce-driven succession of cafés, cinemas and shops, offices and conventional apartments, but rather one that offers free spaces for other forms of encounter and a new definition of the private and the public? All these questions were already being discussed in the mid-1960s: questions about living together beyond the scope of the nuclear family; about living in cramped surroundings; about the sort of spaces people want to meet in, and what social life actually ought to be; about how much privacy people need and what the spaces that provide that privacy should look like; and what can be done to counter any manipulation by the commercial interests of corporations and politics.

As different as they may look, all the projects in this book represent a critique of a dogmatic-rationalist modernity and the political systems of their time. Restricting the scope to European examples does not mean that there were no visionary architects outside Europe at that time – on the contrary. The geographic restriction is due solely to fact that in Europe during the post-war period there was a comparable demographic, social, cultural, and political prerequisite for experimental architecture, one which this book is also to showcase: alternative concepts to a blueprint for society that was reflected in architecture and ur-

ban planning in Europe after 1945. And yet *Eurotopians* can only be a first step in the exploration of the architectural experiments of that period and its creators. \_\_\_\_\_

This book is not a nostalgic look back at the ruins of a decade filled with the optimism of progress; rather, it is an archaeology of the future. It searches among the decaying concrete for traces of experiments that were eventually called off due to the economic crises of the 1970s and the triumph of neoliberal capitalism in the 1980s. \_\_\_\_\_

Yona Friedman, one of the 20th century's most influential architectural thinkers, is a trailblazer for the self-empowerment of residents and a political *arte povera* in architecture that can be both light and spontaneous. He is rightly regarded as one of the architects who, though they themselves built very little, have certainly shaped the discourse like few others. \_\_\_\_\_

Less well known by far are the buildings of Milan architect Cini Boeri, famous first and foremost as a furniture designer. Far away from urban centres, she designed houses like micro-cities in which she examined questions of solitude and togetherness, of individuation and community. \_\_\_\_\_

With her green terraced buildings near Paris, the architect Renée Gailhoustet revolutionised social housing. \_\_\_\_\_

For the film director Michelangelo Antonioni and the actress Monica Vitti, Dante Bini designed a house that was not just a sensation in terms of its construction, but also provided a stage and a form for a modern relationship; today it stands like a life-intensifier on Sardinia's seashore. \_\_\_\_\_

Hans Walter Müller has been living inside an inflatable house in La Ferte-Alais near Paris since 1968. With the aid of his pneumatic structures he demonstrates what *instant urbanism* might look like, one that inflates pop-up restaurants and emergency accommodation wherever it is needed – and also that a building

that provides shelter for 200 people does not have to weigh any more than 32 kg. —————

Claude Parent believed that the way in which we furnish our houses and our lives is repressive in the extreme – and developed the “theory of the oblique”, of a life on the incline in houses filled with gentle ramps on which relations between human beings should become more dynamic. —————

In the hills above Nice and Cannes, Antti Lovag built a luxurious, 1,600 m<sup>2</sup> situationist bubble to illustrate how even the average layperson could build their own dwelling – and what life might look like once their alienation work had ended. —

That, too, is one of the aims of this book: to show that, among the visionaries of 1960s architecture, there were many women such as Bini and Gailhoustet, who have since been systematically sidelined from the history of architecture. —————

For the most part these architects still live in their innovative 1960s world designs; yet are now mostly well into their nineties. And yet each and every one of them stands for an idea of the future we would be well advised to revisit. —————