

## Architectures for the play of the emancipated inhabitant

### Architecture as an in-between interface: Lacaton & Vassal

Casa Latapie. 1993

Edificio de 14 viviendas en Mulhouse. 2005

ENSA Nantes. 2009

Reference: MAROTO-SALES, J. (2021). *Arquitecturas para el juego del habitante emancipado. La arquitectura como dispositivo de intermediación: Lacaton y Vassal. Casa Latapie. 1993, Edificio de 14 viviendas en Mulhouse. 2005, ENSA Nantes. 2009*. Doctoral Thesis. Available at: <<https://upcommons.upc.edu/tesis>>

#### Abstract. Thesis summary

Miessen states, in the book *'The Nightmare of Participation'* (2010), that 'participation' is too often observed through romantic concepts of negotiation and decision making. However, the author proceeds, it has been noted that some formulas do not generate significant results.

This research's framework is based, fundamentally, in the turning of the inhabitant into an active agent in the architectural processes. Specifically, it tracks and highlights the positions and project practices of the French architects Anne Lacaton (1955) and Jean-Philippe Vassal (1954).

The 'turning of the inhabitant into an active agent' has a clear antecedent: during the decades that go from the 50s until the end of the 70s of the xx century (period that undoubtedly shook the discipline with the promotion of various significant displacements), the rebalancing of architect and inhabitant agencies, the dislocation of disciplinary limits, or the unlocking of excessively autonomous and determinists gazes, drew a complex scenario in which both the architecture and what is attributed to the architect were diluted into positions that had a difficult fit for the discipline. Such discipline reacted, as Rossi pointed out, reinforcing disciplinary autonomy, thus distancing it from uncomfortable, unknown, or plainly impossible places.

In the contemporary scenario, once again, 'participation', 'spatial flexibility', 'versatility', or other similar concepts explored during that period, reappear around the discipline.

In order not to fall, yet again, into slippery territories, this research explores an intermediate stage where we can focus on 'participation', within the processes of architecture, from the perspective of 'emancipation' (Rancière): architecture as an *in-between interface* which conveys, mediates and promotes both knowledge of the architect and the inhabitant.

This research explores *how* Lacaton and Vassal project architectures that are understood as a 'thing in-between'; architectures that make the deployment of the concept 'freedom' possible, a term continuously used by them. 'Freedom' for the (emancipated) architect to explore and propose architectures –professional knowledge within the framework of a non-deterministic disciplinary autonomy– and incorporate their intuitions, reflections and personal background; as well as 'freedom' for the (emancipated) inhabitant in order to play, explore, discover, and implement their own knowledge. Architecture thus becomes a kind of communication tool (dialogue), through time, between the architect and the inhabitant, *without impositions* and, fundamentally, *without resignations*.

After an exhaustive analysis of Lacaton and Vassal's works, three basic project strategies have been detected: *space deregulation* –excessively regulated space, in multiple dimensions, heir to modernity–, *biodynamic skin* –the active relationship between inhabitant, architecture and the environment–, and, *unlocking the support* –allowing, for a community of inhabitants, to reconfigure a finished as well as open architecture. Each one of these strategies is deployed by a set of project techniques that are explored and contextualized with the aim of giving this research an operational nature.

This thesis focuses on three works by Lacaton and Vassal in which the following strategies are implemented: the Latapie House (1993), the 14-dwelling building in Mulhouse (2005), and the Nantes

School of Architecture (2009). Architectures that become 'relational', 'performative', and operate in and from everyday life.

"Inhabited space should be generous, comfortable, appropriable, economical, fluid, flexible, bright, evolving and 'luxurious', while allowing for the simplest uses: eating, working, resting, isolating, welcoming and receiving friends, hang clothes, play music, do DIY, park your bicycle, car or watch orchids grow"

Lacaton y Vassal. 2016

**Keywords:** Lacaton and Vassal, in-between interface, Latapie House, 14-dwelling building in Mulhouse, ENSA Nantes, deregulated space, bio-dynamic skin, unlocked support, participation, relational architecture, performative architecture, emancipated inhabitant, agencies, open building