

# EDITORIAL

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## DEFINING A COMMON SPACE

The question is clear: is the common so common? While the surprising consensus in ARQ's editorial committee in the definition of this issue's theme could make us believe so, the intense subsequent debate within the same committee with regard to the emphasis of this number indicates the contrary. The understanding of the common does not seem to be so common.

The arguments were several. On the one hand, the common was understood as the ordinary, that is, as that which has no aspiration to be transformed into something exceptional. On the other, reading this issue in terms of property, the common appeared in relation to the public (if something is common it belongs to everyone, therefore it's public). Finally, given the recent reevaluation of concepts such as 'the commons' (Hardt and Negri) or 'common use' (Agamben), the common was perceived as a political device able to defy the public-private dichotomy and to open up to the possibility for architectures which overcome it.

Being coherent with the theme's plurality, every perspective is present in this issue of ARQ. Both Fell's photographic portfolio and Stutzin's article demonstrate that even that which appears as most common has an implicit political view. The possibilities of a politicized architecture which emerges from the common are explored in articles by Tan, Boano and Astolfo, Sato, and also by Antonoupoulou, Chondros and Koutsari. At the same time, the examples of Atelier Bow-Wow, Rozana Montiel and A(n) Office propose that the architectural project in itself can be an effective tool in generating commonality. Meanwhile, Plan Común, Correa and team, and 3arquitectos propose architectures that multiply the possibilities of interaction within public space. Finally Corvalán –in the only non-urban example in this issue– proposes an aesthetic of 'the ordinary' produced through the direct communication between architect and builder, dismissing the mediation of disciplinary techniques of representation. Back in the city, and in a dossier-like format, we present three texts dedicated to a very common place. Vizcaíno and Garrido present us with the common imaginaries of Santiago as portrayed by recent Chilean film production. Rosas, Hidalgo, Strabucchi and Bannen invite us to observe Brunner's plan to discover how he weaved common spaces within the tissue of the existing city and the modern one. And Vielma presents us the disturbing common images that constitute the visual landscape of Chile's capital city. Thus, in this edition we explore the plurality of meanings of the common, exposing the controversies so that our acute readers can appreciate the diversity of arguments.

Though perhaps, when addressing the common, these disputes aren't such.

In his text "Public and Common(s)", the architect and historian Reinhold Martin analyzes –from architecture– the different meanings of the common and its apparent confusion with the public.<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt for example, sees the common as synonymous of the public because she

understands it in opposition to the individual (which appears in the private space)<sup>2</sup>; therefore, if the common is that which appears in the *polis* –the public sphere where citizens participate– the concept is more related to politics than to property. At the same time, Hardt and Negri propose that “the metropolis (...) is the space of the common, of people living together sharing resources, communicating, exchanging goods and ideas.”<sup>3</sup> As Martin acutely observes, in both visions the city is the environment that allows the common to appear. To this it might be added –as the Smithsons, Venturi and Scott-Brown, or Atelier Bow-Wow have proven–, that the common as the ordinary arises from reassessing the existing city.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, whichever emphasis is made –quotidian, public or political–, it is in the city where the common appears and is produced. Because beyond the fantasy of a life in community as an idyllic or utopian aspiration, the truth is that –precisely due to its inherent pluralism– the common, such as the city, is not foreign to conflict and debate (otherwise it would be another form of totalitarianism). The common, then, isn't that which we all agree upon, but rather the space in which we can safely disagree. Thus, the editorial committee's consensus only reaffirms the renewed preoccupation towards the city in contemporary architecture, while the subsequent debate is nothing else than a natural consequence of the agonistic condition of life in common.

Understanding that architecture operates not only in the multiplicity of scales –from the detail to urban planning– but also in multiple formats – from design to the public debate of ideas– in ARQ magazine we are opening a space for these discussions because we believe that the architect has an unavoidable ethical responsibility towards the city, the place where society gathers because they have something in common. And while the city allows the private to gain profit, it is also the place where the density of individualities makes necessary the existence of spaces for debate and negotiation, in other words, those spaces where what we have in common is at stake. For if the private is that which society is deprived of, then the common is that which is shared.

Today, and challenging the stubborn idealizations we might have about urban life, it seems that fear, comfort and laziness increasingly reduce the existence of those spaces where the common appears and is produced. So what do we do while we discover how to recover the commonality of the city? What might these common spaces be, where different views have a place for discussion, negotiation and coming together? Ideally they should be many. By the way, and based on the prestige built up over 35 years, we hope that in this new stage ARQ magazine can be one of those spaces. **ARQ**