



Construction site of infrastructural development of Deutsche Bahn AG at Ostkreuz

*Tempelhofer Markt* or *Mediaspree versenken* are two such examples (these movements aimed at readjusting and preventing investor-driven urban development in Berlin and succeeded in referendums) - underline the political significance of such a project: if alternatives are not implemented voluntarily by policy makers, the public can be mobilized to radically change urban policy in Berlin.

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#### Notes:

1. <http://www.absoluto-gegenwart.de>
2. Namely Mark Fisher, Bernardo 'Bifo' Berardi or Paul Virilio.
3. <http://www.makecity.berlin>
4. Section 16, running from Neukölln to Treptower Park, will be completed between 2014 and 2022 ([http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/bauversorgungsplanung/100\\_16\\_baue/zahlen.shtml](http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/bauversorgungsplanung/100_16_baue/zahlen.shtml)). The planning process for Section 17, running from Treptower Park to Frankfurter Allee passing by Ostkreuz, has not been completed and the envisaged timeframe for construction has not been announced.
5. Phrase used by Margaret Thatcher claiming that the liberal economy is the best and only way for western societies to develop.
6. in Zusammenarbeit mit der Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt Berlin.

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# Participation as a Battlefield

## Interview with Damon Rich



Subsidized Landscape

*Bernd Upmeyer interviewed the American designer, urban planner, and visual artist Damon Rich, based in Newark, New Jersey, who is known for investigating the politics of the built environment. His work studies the shaping of the world through laws, finance, and politics. In 1997, Rich founded the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), a New York City-based nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to improve civic engagement, where he served as Executive Director and lead designer from 1997 to 2007, when he retired from CUP staff while continuing to serve on the Board of Directors through this year. From 2008 to 2015, Rich served as the Planning Director & Chief Urban Designer for the City of Newark, New Jersey. He now is principal with Jae Shin of planning and design firm Hector Design Service, while continuing his practice as an educator and exhibition-maker. The interview took place in September 2015.*

### Center for Urban Pedagogy

*Bernd Upmeyer: In 2004 you were one of the first contributors to MONU Magazine with an article, written together with your "Center for Urban Pedagogy", for MONU's issue #1 entitled "Imagining the Subsidized Landscape". Just a couple of years previously you founded the Center for Urban Pedagogy, a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to improve the quality of public participation in urban planning and community design in New York City. What were your motivations for creating this organization and why did you want it to focus on public participation at that time? What were your ideals and who were your role models from the past?*

Damon Rich: Hello. Yes, I am remembering the legitimating thrill of being asked by a European journal (I pictured MONU as dour as the Frankfurt School) to report on some of CUP's work. The feeling reflected the European orientation of my architectural education, which heroized early 20th-century modernism through the distorting lens of the 1970s US East Coast architectural vanguard.

*"CUP projects demystify the urban policy and planning issues that impact our communities, so that more individuals can better participate in shaping them."*

*"There, I saw what passed for public participation in the collective design and governance of the built environment, how the abstract mandate of public participation in planning and design was translated into material facts ..."*

The invitation to write came from Thomas Soehl, who curiously was a European working for the New York City government, a job that even my most progressive friends find, sadly to me, unappealing. But this is changing! The article, written and illustrated by myself and Rosten Woo, described the Subsidized Landscape, a project we first put together for the City without a Ghetto exhibition using drawings and models to provide ways of thinking about the politics of housing subsidies in our mixed economy. After the article was published, the interactive model full of LEDs traveled in its bulky entirety to Venice for the US pavilion in the 2008 architecture biennale. Although I'm not sure international architecture exhibition viewers were very interested in the details of US housing subsidies, I imagine the look of its semi-obsolete sci-fi command center provided a convenient image for curators to talk about the age-old and corrupt idea of architects "getting control" of the wild systems that inhibit them. For a more solid and demonstrable impact addressing similar topics, I would point to CUP's later Affordable Housing Toolkit and the Newark Zoning Workshop I developed with that city's planning office, both used by community-based and advocacy organizations in public sessions with members engaged in current struggles over affordability and urban development.

But that is jumping ahead of the story. To return to the beginning, I'd like to amend the phrase "your [CUP]" in the question. By 2004, CUP had been incorporated as a nonprofit organization for three years, the result of much effort building the organization's basic infrastructure and capacity. (It was not until the following year I first was able to draw a regular salary: US\$1000 per month!) Part of the conscious trade-off of the nonprofit form, something we negotiate as we institutionalize, is that in return for access to certain types of funding, there are limits on ownership and investment profit. The deliberation about whether this was a good choice, instead of a more traditional form for incorporating a design firm, was an earlier story. By 2004, we were committed to a model of CUP belonging to no one and instead, as the nonprofit consultants say, being "owned" by its mission.

For many years now, CUP, which continues to thrive and grow in capacity under its third Executive Director Christine Gaspar, states its mission as "The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement. CUP projects demystify the urban policy and planning issues that impact our communities, so that more individuals can better participate in shaping them." While the language of CUP's mission has evolved over the years (as has the meaning of the acronym: Cities Understood by People, Center for Urban Participation, Cutting Up Posers), it has always touched education, design, art, critical analysis, and self-government.

My first job out of architecture school was in the Capital Projects Division of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. I worked with 10 architects, 100 landscape architects, 20 engineers to design and build over \$200 million worth of parks and recreation facilities per year. There, I saw what passed for public participation in the collective design and governance of the built environment, how the abstract mandate of public participation in planning and design was translated into material facts: the parks themselves, but also public hearings, design consultations, and other rituals of democratic design in the late 20th century imperial but class- and race-divided city. Conceptually thrilling and experientially dismal, a heroic play performed by the most deflated actors, at other times a tremendously byzantine but triumphant process unfolding over years but leading to transcendent moments. I had a million questions about how to build models to organize speculative public discussions, how to order agendas to lead to unexpected results, how to use the abundant tools and tropes from art and architecture history to supplement social decision-making. So when I used the word "participation," I wanted to bolster the democratic governance of design, the collective experience of making the city. While overly precious and self-heroic, I know I'm not alone in investing innocent excitement in Cedric Price's Fun Palace for its poetic evocation of an architecture directly formed by the desires of its users. I'm just looking for the actually existing Fun Palace!



CUP's Affordable Housing Toolkit

In the US context, it was only two generations ago that basic legal rights were won for any sort of public participation in planning and designing the environment. The first national laws requiring public participation around land use and development date from 1954, required by the federal government from cities to receive funding as part of the "Workable Program" element of Urban Renewal applications. So this whole thing where we try to create a system where society designs for itself in way we can defend as participatory and just is really somewhat new! I was amazed to learn about forebears who pushed against purely property-based power over the environment towards more public and social control through building codes, zoning laws, public construction, and had won some significant basic rights around quantity. But working at Parks and elsewhere I saw the limits of the regime as it existed of required public notices, hearings, board deliberations, etc. It seemed clear that the fight we had inherited was for the quality of this public participation, which is where that particular phrase you quote came from. The current language is better.

But even in my students days, participation was not an innocent and hopeful term; there was already a tradition with a clear cynical position on it. Maybe you know the French poster that says "I participate, you participate, we participate, they profit" or the Situationist saying that "urban planning is the organization of participation in something in which it is impossible to participate." More useful for me was "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," the article Sherry Arnstein wrote after resigning in disgust from HUD's late 1960s Model Cities program. Instead of theorizing participation as a devious ploy or pure nightmare, she provides a rubric for strategic thinking about modes of participation and their attendant power dynamics, more geared for each party in a conflict to think about the qualities of participation most useful to them and most damaging to their opponents.

This differentiated sense of the potentials of participation (participation as a field of battle, not a unitary concept) highlighted all sorts of alluring potential design briefs from installations and videos to workshops and guidebooks to be inserted into and around the processes through which we as a society decide how to build the places we live. I came out of school believing that this architectural-philosophical tradition of thinking and imagining that I had just learned to value, where the built landscape and an intentional process of building it can critically reflect and affect conditions of life, could be valuable for an entire world of non-architects enmeshed in struggles around the built environment. Maybe you know the Wu-Tang mythology about the monk who after generations chooses to bring his guarded disciplinary knowledge to the populace. You know, when you're young, drinking beer, listening to hip hop, and watching kung fu movies...

Influences and heroes include a wide swatch of visionary architecture that gave me the thrill of imagining how the world might be different and what it would look like: Boullée, Ledoux, Piranesi, Corbusier, Smithsons, Archigram, Superstudio, Archizoom, OMA. I was very influenced by a gift from my grandmother of The Dictionary of Imaginary Places, edited by Gianni Guadalupi, written as a travel guide with many maps of fictional locales like More's Utopia and Lewis's Narnia. All these things melt together with the general psychedelic popular culture of my 1970s and 1980s childhood, like animations on Sesame Street, Monty Python, and Yellow Submarine and explanatory drawings in Richard Scarry and David Macaulay books. When I was in school, there were lots of intense abstract drawings around like Tschumi's Manhattan Transcripts, Liebeskind's Micromegas, Hadid's Peak, and Eisenman's axonometric model, although these were associated with a stifling discourse of "autonomy" and abstract "criticality." One time, CUP co-founder Jason Anderson and I actually picketed an Eisenman lecture at Columbia's Avery Hall carrying signs saying "Shellfish architecture makes us sick!"

Reacting against this tradition, I was helped towards thinking about how architecture mediates power through exposure to contemporary art hanging around Cooper Union, from minimalism to Institutional Critique like Michael Asher, Hans Haacke, Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Stephen Willats, Nils Norman, and Group Material. I was attracted to these



Newark Zoning Workshop

*"So when I used the word 'participation,' I wanted to bolster the democratic governance of design, the collective experience of making the city."*

artists dealing with architecture as a form of institutionalization because my first years of college were spent with the European post-structuralist vanguard of writers like Foucault and Derrida, focused so intently on how minute details of representations and social actions, including architecture and design, are implicated in identity formation and power politics. I suppose it's not surprising if still disappointing that among other popular topics that leap from art to architecture, the institutional critique of architecture never got much play. In practice, I was also able to find ways around this blockage through New York City's amazing ecology of design education institutions like the Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment, which occupied an originally squatted Brooklyn park building, the Henry Street Settlement, and the Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum's Summer Design Initiative and City of Neighborhoods program.

Maybe most importantly for setting CUP's course were writers, teachers, and organizers in traditions of popular education (like Septima Clark, Ella Baker, and Myles Horton) and community organizing (Saul Alinsky and dozens of people I've met and worked with). These people and the movements they represent, who worked on legitimating non-expert knowledge, taking groups through analysis to action, and building people power, allowed me to begin in earnest to connect my architectural ambitions to a wider world where the agendas had to be developed by others. Weaving tools of architectural analysis and representation into land use politics was only possible by translating them into the urgent vocabulary of place-based politics.

#### Autonomy and Dependency

BU: When you started the Center for Urban Pedagogy you were quite young, in your early 20s, and I guess you were endowed with a lot of enthusiasm and energy. In the Netherlands the established and older generation is usually very eager to hear fresh voices and sometimes tries to "make capital out of these new ideas and immediately absorbs them in an unfair and ungenerous manner in order to make use of these new ideas", as Winy Maas put it in an interview we did with him for our issue #21. To what extent did the Center for Urban Pedagogy become compromised during its first few years: ruled and co-opted by the interests of communities, local governments, organisations, neo-liberal parties, etc. rather than working for individual citizens?

DR: The unhappiness expressed by Maas's quotation I think is familiar to anyone in contact with fields and industries where worth is attached to appearing to have new ideas, or worse, actually documenting those ideas for legal battles over intellectual property rights. (Of course, the same design festivals that will pay for my flight and hotel to talk on their panel about "designing equity" will also enthusiastically link the design industries to modern magic contemporary capitalist "creativity" and "innovation.") I'm happy to leave the principal of intellectual possession to the self-heroizing cultural vanguardists and capitalist ideologues.

On the other hand, I don't harbor much resentment on this account as I didn't spend time working in any master's atelier who would have had occasion to steal my ideas. In fact, being a young practitioner in New York introduced me personally to a large set of older people who offered great inspiration and encouragement like Sharon Zukin, Greg Sholette, Alan Moore, Doug Ashford, Gayatri Spivak, and the aforementioned Martha Rosler. The book edited by Julie Ault on New York City artist- and architect-run spaces in the 1970s and 1980s introduces the scene that I was able to learn about from those who lived it.

In CUP's case, much youthful enthusiasm was expended in building a semi-autonomous organizational infrastructure: registering with the state as a corporation, with the federal government as a nonprofit, tax-exempt entity, opening bank accounts, figuring out taxes and bookkeeping. In my ten years as CUP's Executive Director, I learned tons dealing with the typical headaches of a small nonprofit: developing programs and partners,

staffing, growing a reputation, finding relationships with funders. As a generation coming after institutional critique, it felt right to focus deeply on building better institutions! Today, it's gratifying to me that CUP now provides full-time jobs to eight people working with design and justice, and provide them health care! So maybe a young Winy working at CUP would have fewer reasons to complain.

Your question also brings up the central question of whose interests CUP serves. I would be a bad student of community organizing if I didn't recommend performing a power analysis of CUP; the point of establishing an institution is to sustain privileges! The process institutionalization is, when done well, strategic co-optation: how an organization structures its internal and external relationships to enable practice. Externally, these relationships are recorded in lists of partners (including advocates for tenants, low-income workers, community organizations, street vendors, and public schools) and funders (ranging from government agencies to private foundations oriented to the fine arts). Internally, it's the push and pull of staff and board members.

Because of its relatively independent (never formally affiliated with a larger established institution or organization) and slow (eight years of work before having full-time staff) growth, CUP has in some ways had less stringent strings than many nonprofits. Due to attending a tuition-free college for two years of my education, I was able to contribute surplus labor to CUP instead of a student lender, our first office was a "secret" construction in the building where I worked as a part-time building superintendent after leaving the Parks department, and many early projects benefited from the uncompensated and under-compensated work of very many collaborators. Unlike many nonprofits, CUP was not brought to life by a combination of someone's family wealth and guilty conscience. And even without great resources or connections, being in the thick nonprofit and media stew of New York meant we could find advocacy partners and get covered.

Productively describing and structuring CUP's role among its partners, collaborators, and others has been an ongoing process. For example, in beginning to seek grant funding, we realized that competing with housing advocates or tenant organizers would alienate our intended partners, so we began to use technical assistance (third-party-funded) and other models for supporting projects. For this reason among others, CUP has not presented itself as an advocacy organization, but as a design and art organization that always works with advocates and community-based organizations in specific ways. As an organization dedicated to education, we wanted to avoid solution-mongering and hold open a space for real discovery, for seeing the conflicts all around us in their deep complexity as learning opportunities. Myles Horton wrote about this as preserving the educational moment alongside but always a bit separated from and critical of activist politics.

But overall, when you ask how CUP has been "ruled and co-opted by the interests of communities, local governments, organisations, neo-liberal parties, etc. rather than working for individual citizens?", I am proud to say CUP has been productively ruled and co-opted in more ways than I can list! (I'd rather this not be true only of the "neo-liberal parties" part, but then I must also wish that the United States had a non-neoliberal party!) The intent of CUP's organizational structure, as well as the structure of programs like Making Policy Public, was to open it to the agendas of people organized to advocate for political change, not to operate on the idea of serving atomized "individual citizens" (perhaps itself a neoliberal invention). The tradition of community organizing taught me a lot about reading the landscape of organizational power and how to begin relationships with people already organized around their interests in change. I wonder if you think the landscape of power is changing in Europe, where many of my friends see a growing US-style liberalization of markets creating monstrous architectures (see Vienna train station district) and supporting stark inequality. Maybe US-style neoliberalization and the withdrawal of the national government from the welfare state promises will also dialectically force the creation of a more US-style web of community-based organizations

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*"Instead of theorizing participation as a devious ploy or pure nightmare, she provides a rubric for strategic thinking about modes of participation and their attendant power dynamics..."*



Vienna train station district

*"From a disciplinary perspective, coming from the planet of axonometric models, I wanted to put architecture back into the world."*

fighting for their corner of the world?

Early on, the worst, though rare, accusation about CUP's connection to the world was when, because of similarly named, more artistically oriented endeavors like the Center for Land Use Interpretation in Los Angeles, people guessed CUP to be a mock institution or performance. On the contrary, we wanted to learn to not let our cultural education encumber us, and actually to be an institution that advanced democratic design in the down and dirty political world. That means making ongoing decisions about with whom and on what to work, a discussion and debate that continues among CUP staff and board. On the other hand, in terms of visual style, yes, we have for several years seen campaigns like that for a potentially predatory health insurer that use drawings of a friendly bear that look eerily similar to some of CUP's work. But better to have your style compromised than your politics.

#### Improving the Quality of Participation

BU: How, at first, did you intend to use design and art to improve the quality of public participation in urban planning and community design through the Center for Urban Pedagogy? Can you give some examples? What kind of projects did you do in relation to public participation and where were they located?

DR: From a disciplinary perspective, coming from the planet of axonometric models, I wanted to put architecture back into the world. Rather than only insisting on responsible design in panel discussions with other architects, I wanted to join people working systematically increase democratic control of the built environment in a context dominated by property-rights. This meant asking, in public, to whom design responds. I wanted to be helpful in the steady and slow work of turning around institutions and design processes that use abstraction to link democracy and the built environment in order to put something like a public in its deserved place. I bring up the disciplinary issue because I found these to be some of the biggest impediments to designers working well with partners outside of the field.

A design buzzword in my world that is hopefully near its expiration is "reimagine," as in "so-and-so designer reimagines the spoon! or the house! or your city!" I'd like to make a flag that says "Reimagine reimagining!" By that I mean down with the agency of the idea, the historic roots of design's definition as action-at-a-distance: I produce this drawing, and someone else does the labor of making it. Against the idea that any temporary act of imagination can revolutionize. Criticizing this idea means down with design idealisms, for example how architecture is generally taught as an "architecture without planning," where most design exercises contemplate isolated sites while a single semester urban studio provides the academic training for building in society. It also means exposing how the tab that pops up when you buy your Apple product saying "Designed in California" covers over the sweated labor of workers an ocean away from California. Criticizing design idealisms can help us talk with non-designers.

Contrary to the way it is sometimes read, the somewhat unfortunate word "pedagogy" in one version of CUP's name was not originally intended to portray ourselves as teachers, but instead to highlight the pedagogical function of the designed environment: how the material world, especially in cities, channels power and norms behavior. So this 25-cent word expressed my desire to understand the social microdynamics of power in the built environment. As a discipline that in theory concerned itself with the conceptual and material arrangement of the human environment, it made sense that architects with political ambitions should study the point in the system at which they might exercise authority, starting with the physical details. If narratives of oppression are built in the landscape (most often appearing as lack of consideration amidst more brutal moves serving larger masters), designers can learn from how this has gone down and join the tradition of trying to steer otherwise. The idea that only market forces should govern who

lives where has never been uncontested. Today I think of this as growing the constituency for accountable development, with my specific interest being in Design for Organizing. I think about how to design things that attract the desires and narratives of others. Things that when someone asks someone standing there "Who put this here?" the someone has something productive to say besides "some architect thought it was a good idea I suppose." Maybe something like "people in this city fought for this in this place and against great odds won." I could tell you about a bright orange boardwalk in Newark that has now attracted over a dozen stories.



Orange boardwalk in Newark

Needless to say, it would be difficult to build a diverse coalition if the only goal were to produce more interesting architecture to architects. One set of partners for me has been educators and their institutions including schools. Here, we talk about civic engagement and the power of design and its tools of abstraction and projection in civics education. We try to find ways of talking about how new urban citizenship requires new urban literacies, and how approaches to studying the world from architecture and art can help all kinds of students understand how the physical forms of the observed world connects to abstract political, economic agendas. This hopefully builds towards critical education for social decision-making, moving out from primordialist understandings of the landscape (that that portrayed by Robert Smithson in his "Monuments of Passaic") and towards training a regulatory imagination for the long haul, how we as citizens hitch our imaginations to the administration of the state to design our lives.

In addition to educators, there is a set of potential partners operating in the world of place-based politics. With these groups, we can talk about disassembling the expertise usually entrenched in the architect or planner so that these tools are available to a broader constituency. For example, by becoming more fluent in the intricacies and contradictions of affordable housing categories, these organized groups increase their power and agency to shape the world. In Newark I've learned to call this "praying with your feet."

Coming from architecture affords me to open up the politics of what might otherwise pass as technical. "Faith in the possibility of a radically democratized mode of participation implied faith in the possibility of a radically different city than redevelopment had typically wrought." Architectural reasoning in public on behalf of the public. When conservatives fighting against even semi-socialized healthcare say "We need to tell young voters they will be paying for a bunch of old sick people they don't even know!", we need to tell stories from the other side about how the state can be put to use for shared benefit

In this way, CUP's goal was never simply to design and communicate information effectively, but to help train minds able to interpret information critically. For educating architects and urban designers, this means teaching through conflict investigation to practice a dialectical view of cobbles and bollards and their relationships to the circulation of power in space, and not just when they are flying through the air!

So an early example, from 2001, was a series of exhibitions and public events commemorating the centennial of New York City's first building code, the Tenement House Act. The exhibitions brought together explanatory representations of mechanisms like zoning and rent control with contributions from a wide variety of advocacy organizations connected to the built environment. A two-channel video presented a mock talk show featuring actual government officials, architects, designers, housing advocates, and others talking about the rules we use to govern the environment. The project also included a poster designed in partnership with tenant organization Metropolitan Council on Housing that fit the major NYC tenant rights onto a door-sized print.

CUP's methods progressed through partnerships with schools, which still form a large portion of CUP's annual work. An early move in this direction was Garbage Problems, a collaborative investigation of New York City's garbage infrastructure with City-as-School, a public high school in lower Manhattan. Students and CUP teaching architects, policy

*"Faith in the possibility of a radically democratized mode of participation implied faith in the possibility of a radically different city than redevelopment had typically wrought."*



The major NYC tenant rights on a door-sized print

analyst, and filmmakers visited garbage infrastructure, interviewed people involved in garbage problems, and made a poster series, video, public event.

Another step towards CUP's current form were a series of projects about public housing in New York City produced in partnership with Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side. In this case, following sitting for an interview with CUP students, an advocacy organization engaged CUP to raise funds and execute a project included a series of posters and a public access television show.

#### Limits of Participation

BU: What were your experiences with your projects at that time? Could you improve the quality of public participation? If yes, what was the impact of participation and where did you encounter limits and problems? How effective were your projects?

DR: The itinerary of CUP's work was a nourishing education for me as a designer, affording the chance to develop a set of ideas with a growing set of partners in increasingly specific and fascinating contexts. As is probably obvious, the work began with a less than panoramic view of the field to make general pronouncements about public participation in general. But certainly the first few years helped me get better at participating with the public! By this I mean recognizing the necessity and learning the discipline of translating myself into other perspectives. Saul Alinsky writes about being able to talk to people persuasively in terms of their own languages and interests. So I saw the growing set of partners seeking out CUP over the years as a promising sign.

In terms of effectiveness, a crucial question in a field where self-congratulations is the norm, how do you measure? Early on, the impacts were not clear. I used to talk about how everything would be worth it if at an exhibition opening, a community organizer would spill her wine on an architect, who would step on the shiny shoe of a politician, until the whole room was squirming. No matter how happy the opening party, though, it was always sad when time to box up or destroy an elaborate installation. This dissatisfaction led to developing program models like Making Policy Public, where CUP structures collaborations between its own staff, visual thinkers, and advocates with a constituency that result in fold-out posters for education and organizing. It took years for us to distill programs where it even made sense to talk about actually indicators of impact and how they could be captured in metrics.

Such indicators and metrics accompany the deliberation processes CUP uses to imagine the future of the organization. Becoming a nonprofit and competing to win funding required articulating a "theory of change" and producing multiyear strategic plans, which for a decade have been linked to annual program guidelines produced by the Executive Director in discussion with the board of directors. None of this is original, but builds from templates and conventions of the US nonprofit world around mission-based organizations and impact. To inform its work as well as justify it to supporters, CUP tracks everything from internet video views to former students who go on to join community organizations. You can find all kinds of specific stories on CUP's website.

#### Power of People

BU: If you could start the Center for Urban Pedagogy all over again, what would you do differently to transform public participation into a truly critical method of political and aesthetic urban engagement? To what extent might individual citizens really have become valuable, useful, and proactive in the production and development of cities and the shaping of neighbourhoods?

DR: Since your question conveys an understandable skepticism of how the individual person might ever be productively linked to the giant machines that produce our living

spaces, to be clear, I believe that public participation, construed widely to include activities like going to meetings, writing letters, hanging out a local bar, staging protests, and running for elected office, is a truly critical method of political and aesthetic urban engagement, and beyond engagement to realizing astounding forms of architecture and life in democracy! But of course CUP is a microscopic plankton in the wide seas of place-based politics, so I see lots of needs for other and different agencies and audiences. My goals are to keep building the movement of organized people demanding design and development that is democratically accountable, and to design things connected in deep ways to struggles over such demands. I have a hundred stories to break your heart, but a few dozen to make anyone believe in the power of the people.

Perversely, the contemporary villains in this fight include a growing legion of "public participation" consultants. One once told me he offered governments a "bulletproof process" that no amount of citizen disruption could stop! This marginalizing strategy also manifests as the convention in much US urban planning to reserve a stand-alone element of a city's master plan for public engagement, instead of seeing all planning and development as a sustained community-organizing campaign. So one area for continued intervention is within the disciplinary organizations of architects and planners, both the mainstream ones like American Institute of Architects and American Planning Association as well as left-wing subgroups like the Architects, Designers, and Planners for Socially Responsible Design and Planners Network.

Certainly, I see room for work getting people who want to do this work into municipal government. There's also definitely possibilities on more regional and national levels, finding ways to support work like CUP's in other cities.

*"One once told me he offered governments a "bulletproof process" that no amount of citizen disruption could stop!"*

Damon Rich is a designer, urban planner, and visual artist, based in Newark, New Jersey, who is known for investigating the politics of the built environment. His work studies the shaping of the world through laws, finance, and politics. He explains his approach as follows: "My exhibitions function as a kind of case study or experiment; each begins with a group of investigators who know little about the subject at hand, acting as stand-ins for the general public." In 1997, Rich founded the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), a New York City-based nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to improve civic engagement, where he served as Executive Director and lead designer from 1997 to 2007, when he retired from CUP staff while continuing to serve on the Board of Directors through this year. From 2008 to 2015, Rich served as the Planning Director & Chief Urban Designer for the City of Newark, New Jersey, where he led the design and construction of the city's first riverfront parks, was founding director of the city's first public art programme, and was primary author of the city's first new zoning law since 1954. He now is principal with Jae Shin of planning and design firm Hector Design Service, while continuing his practice as an educator and exhibition-maker.

Bernd Upmeyer is the editor-in-chief and founder of MONU Magazine. He is also the founder of the Rotterdam-based Bureau of Architecture, Research, and Design (BOARD). He studied architecture and urban design at the University of Kassel (Germany) and the Technical University of Delft (Netherlands). Since June 2012 Upmeyer and his office BOARD are part of the group, led by STAR - strategies + architecture, that has been chosen as one of the new six teams of architects and urban planners appointed by the Atelier International Grand Paris (AIGP) to be part of the Scientific Committee for the mission: Grand Paris: pour une métropole durable. He holds a PhD (Dr.-Ing.) in Urban Studies from the University of Kassel (Germany). He is the author of the book "Binational Urbanism - On the Road to Paradise", in which he creates a theory of binational urbanism, a term coined by him.

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*"... I believe that public participation, construed widely to include activities like going to meetings, writing letters, hanging out a local bar, staging protests, and running for elected office, is a truly critical method of political and aesthetic urban engagement, ..."*