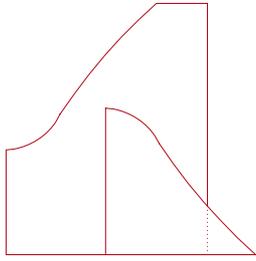


N Broken tinted glass



A comparison of the photographs of the Pavilion of '29 and those of its reconstruction make it possible to detect how the current gray glass panes in the Carpet Room are not as dark as the originals. Despite the great efforts which have been made, it has been impossible to find an industrial supplier of glass like the original one, thereby causing a difference. The updates do not cease in the currentness of the way in which the Pavilion of '29 was explained as the device through which contemporary industrial materials were portrayed. It is precisely

the difference which, in this case, preserves and instills the reconstruction with one of the most important purposes of the Pavilion of '29.

Andrés Jaque Interviewed by Hans Ulrich Obrist

Hans Ulrich Obrist: *To begin with, I wanted to ask you how it all started. What was your epiphany? In other words, how did you come to architecture or how did architecture come to you?*

Andrés Jaque: Actually, I had a number of interests. At some point I started to get into architecture and I ended up doing architecture. Many people think that what I do isn't architecture, because my work is inclined towards challenging its limits as a discipline, including, as part of the job, giving an account of the nature of the site from which I'm working.

So your interests were varied before you entered into architecture. Who are your models? Your heroes? What architecture inspires you?

To be honest, it's not something I'm absolutely clear about, but I believe I came into architecture through a number of interests like interior decoration, Christmas trees, dinner settings or parties. Afterwards other major interests have always been discussion. Discussion as a social activity. How things get discussed, and how we, as societies, somehow get engaged and activated through daily parliaments. How daily life is rendered political in the way basic things like changing the TV channel are disputed. In my opinion, TV remote controls, with

the discussions they trigger off, are devices that turn living rooms into daily life parliaments by committing people to stances so that they can take part in everyday discussions. The TV remote control might be regarded as an example of the political role I think architectural devices can play. So the two things, interior design and discussion, mashed up at one point and that, I believe, is where my inspiration comes from.

The way your work includes parliaments brings Cedric Price and the 'Pop-up Parliament' to my mind. It makes me also think of Bruno Latour and the 'Parliament of Things'. Are they inspirations for you?

Definitely. I discovered Cedric Price early at college, and it was a revelation! His works, especially those in which he tries to make invisible social processes visible, make people discuss them and introduce them into their daily lives. There are projects like 'Circlorama' for the 1962 Glasgow Fair, in which people were allowed access to the Town Hall tower so that they could see and discuss something that, though it radically affected their lives, had been kept hidden in unpublished documents: the preserved areas of the city lit up in red as part of the project. We might also point out his intervention at the 1966 Sheffield Festival, in which he prompted

Hans-Ulrich Obrist is an art curator, critic and art historian. He is co-director of Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects at the Serpentine Gallery, London. Obrist is the author of 'The Interview Project', an extensive ongoing project of interviews.

public discussion by wrongly marking the heights of a number of buildings and urban infrastructures (like chimneys) in order to generate a debate on the height of buildings in the city. The fact that an official marking wasn't meant to stifle debate and controversy, but to bring it out into the open and become part of daily life, is exactly what I'm interested in. And, of course, Bruno Latour's work has been very important for me. Not only Latour but the entire context where a number of people and groups have developed symmetrical readings of society in which material devices gain the same status as humans, other living beings, ideas or actions. These are the conceptual environments in which I'm very keen to work.

What's particularly interesting about Bruno Latour is that he's become a kind of reference point for some architects today. Obviously each era has its own authors, but in this case they do more than just quote him. Latour's work is a toolbox, something like Foucault's idea that the text could be a toolbox, and it strikes me that right now this is what Bruno Latour represents for many architects. To what extent is he a toolbox for you? Is it the actor-network theory or what?

In many senses, both Latour and the whole network in which STS (Science

○ Supports



Supports on which the travertine slabs rest in the Pavilion floor, contrary to the solution in the Pavilion of '29, in which the stone slabs were placed directly onto a flooring and drained water directly from its external surface.

and Technology Studies) is being developed question some of the common assumptions architectural practice used to be based on and provide, as you say, an alternative toolbox for architects to work with. The first alternative they propose is, of course, to think of reality as a series of webs of associated agencies, of diverse natures, which only get to happen in the performance of their associations. The second is the fact that individual actors are defined by the way they relate to otherness, which is not a foundational fact but a changing and contingent one. In these webs, architectural devices are not a frame for societies to occupy, but actors

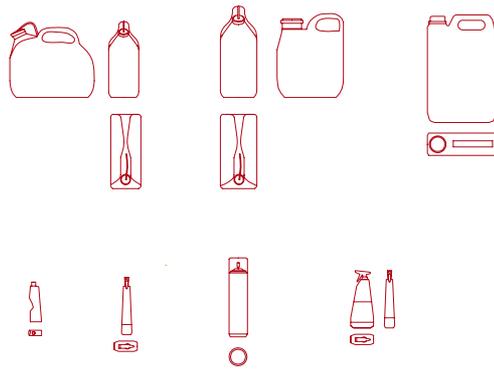
with a symmetrical role to that of others, including people here. The notion of 'good' society is also important, not as a happy or peaceful one, but one constructed out of dispute. It highlights the importance of shared material constitutions capable of bringing dispute into durable political arenas. Alongside Latour, others who have exerted great influence on the work I do include Michel Serres, Javier Izquierdo, Michel Callon, Fabián Muniesa, Amparo Lasén, Noortje Marres, Andrew Barry, Javier Lezaún and Eric Lautner. And authors who have constructed ways of rethinking the political scenario, like Walter Lippmann, John Dewey, Peter

Sloterdijk, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau and many others, are also of great importance when it comes to conceptually shaping current architectural practice. Architecture's main role is to bring the social into politics. We need to think about what kind of social renderings might succeed in providing inclusive and lively representations of the complexity which societies are made of. Should architecture strive to produce renderings of young, healthy, un-politicized people smiling while inhabiting sunny neutral-considered locations? Or should we contribute to rendering societies as material encounters constructed out of difference, controversy



'Mouride Home Urbanism. Case Study'. Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation, 2012.

P Cleaning products used in the Pavilion on an everyday basis



and instability, as a way to make our daily life inclusive?

This also requires us to think about architects' current status in society and what roles and positions we can play and occupy. The main change in the way modern architects consider themselves is that we are now aware of the fact that there is no single position from which we can gain crystal-clear or diaphanous access to perception of reality as a whole. For me it's no longer possible to produce aerial views of the environment I work with, like Le

Corbusier did with cities, because the urban assemblages I work on are not fix realities concentrated on a single location. They don't simply lie down there to be photographed. They are much more complex, multilocated, fragmented, multiscaled and invisible. The need exists for a crisis in the social status of experts and specialised knowledge. It's not about decreasing the authority of experts, however; rather, we're experiencing a process in which recognition of diversity in knowledge, sensitivities and concerns, none of them sufficient

in themselves to expel uncertainty and dispute, makes it necessary to understand decision-making processes as something collective and participative, in which different agencies are involved, and all outcomes are nothing but the result of collective interaction.

From my point of view, technology – and I'd say that architecture is better described if regarded as a technology – is not a progressive linearity, in which something which is better adapted makes the rest obsolete, but a whole context of rhizomatic parallel



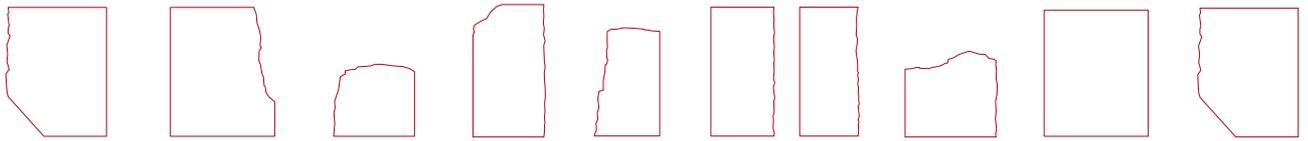
'EXCARAVOX. Agrosocial infrastructure to grow crops of voice equipped citizens'. Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation. Madrid, 2012.

Q Travertine

The cracks in the travertine used in the Pavilion have been left open. This instills it with a great plastic richness, but also contributes to the pieces' fragility. This fragility, coupled with the tensions resulting from

the system of supports at specific points, is the reason why repairs are necessary to avoid shattering. The desire to avoid replacements with new pieces being translated into a loss of chromatic homogeneity has

caused the Pavilion basement to be used as a storage site for fragments which await repair through the use of fiberglass and resin on the underside of the stone pieces.



experiences and discussions in which differences are constructed by the way they interact. In this context there is no place for foundational or *a priori* notions of ethics; delegating to ethics based on ideas external to the process of interactions makes no sense. This perspective generates a way of thinking ethics in architecture in which the intentions of authors are of less importance than the result of their intentions as the process is socialised. Edgar Morin's ideas on a socialised notion of ethics and the 1998 Precautionary Principle, the legal invention by which to make responsibility a socially distributed reality, are opening up entirely new approaches to the politics of architecture.

aim of somehow making it possible for people to enter the process, become competitive on reading it, and evaluate and take part in a process that has so far passed by rather unnoticed, to turn it into a discussed, public one. We were using tools taken from the visual and performing arts, like providing different colours to the resources moved by each building company so their domains could become transparent to people, or organizing sessions for experts to discuss their solutions with non-professional visitors. We intended somehow to establish a connection between fields that are not so likely to cooperate and that tend to develop in particular critical environments. Creating social aware-

ness by connecting critical domains like political sciences, architecture, sociology, visual arts and construction was the main strategy I adopted when it came to finding new ways for social reality to emerge.

In Venice, Kazuyo Sejima gave us something to think about with her idea of People Meeting Architecture. How did you relate to this theory? And can you maybe tell us about how your 'FRAY FOAM HOME' project for Venice actually came into existence?

We were thrilled when Sejima asked us to occupy the central space of the Palazzo at the Venice Biennale, ten years after she had done so in the Japa-

I've also been very interested in the production of reality, how to produce reality. But I want to come to something else Latour says. In relation to your work he talks about the mix of art, politics and building. How do you achieve this mix? Latour said that about a project we developed. We called it '12 Actions to Make Peter Eisenman Transparent'. Peter Eisenman was working in Santiago on this massive architectural complex, Cidade da Cultura, and we were hired to do something that would hide the building site because politicians thought it was kind of ugly. But in my view it wasn't about whether or not it was too visible, but whether it was transparent to the people affected by it. We ended up developing 12 actions to make the implications and the hidden parts of the building process transparent, with the



'12 Actions to Make Peter Eisenman Transparent'. Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation. Cidade da Cultura, Santiago de Compostela, 2004.

R Testing prior to installing the carpentry work

Although the first stainless steel patents were obtained in 1912, it was not yet available for use in architecture in 1929. The carpentry work in the Pavilion of '29 was produced using chromed steel. At the time of

its reconstruction, the team in charge decided to produce it in polished, shined stainless steel which, despite changing the appearance, could, because of its greater durability, be described as a 'technically superior' solution. However, according to the testimony of some of the witnesses of the discussions in which this topic was dealt with, the argument wielded to reach the final decision was that, "This is what Mies would have done if stainless steel had been available to him." At the time when the Pavilion reconstruction was officially opened, someone

pointed out the Phillips screws used to join the pillars to the covering, as being an invention that took place after construction of the Pavilion of '29. Asked about this subject, one of the architects who took part in the reconstruction admits that his mistake occurred due to the believe that Mies would have used star-shaped screws on the cruciform pillars. This daring assumption allows us to detect how a desire for coherence placed in the figure of the ingenious architect Mies does not provide a full explanation for what seem to be effects of contingent interactions.



nese Pavilion at the 2000 Biennale with the important statement that girls were producing a parallel city in Tokyo in the way they related to their clothes and to the decoration of their bedrooms. That opened up an aspect of Sejima's work that radically connects with my interests.

Ordinary accounts of how architecture creates value assume that architecture's main contribution is to make specific conditions and particular activities available. This leads to arguments like 'you feel comfortable because architecture makes temperature stable' or 'you can cook because architecture provides the infrastructures, furniture and space to make the required activities possible'. But architecture plays another role that, in my opinion, is of greater importance: it's not the provision of unlikely conditions or functional possibilities, but the provision of a critical framework in which reality can emerge as a social construction; not creating new situations, but rather making the underlying relational schemes in which reality is constructed explicit, and in this emergency the underlying relational schemes are reconstructed and critically equipped. In 'FRAY FOAM HOME', my intention was to maximise this possibility in the approach to a particular ordinary home.

'FRAY FOAM HOME' is also part of a long-term project to think of and project domestic interiors as fragmented though connected common arenas. Vindicating the political role domestic interiors play is a good passing point

from which to deliver alternative visions of the politics of architecture. Narratives of heroic superstructures confronting monolithic powers strongly persist which, in my opinion, have hindered architectural efforts to make accurate accounts of the arenas they wanted to be part of. I defend the idea that the most important public concerns are disputed in domestic interiors or in places or devices that we might relate to domestic interiors. But domestic environments, even now, tend to be described through inaccurate notions and still tend to be regarded

as politically insignificant and disconnected from the spaces of social confrontation. The ethnography that the office I coordinate has recently been developing in over 90 case studies has shown how politics are currently embodied in networks of devices in which domestic interiors hold key roles. No political action happens without invading and being performed in networks of domestic environments. This certainly explains why so far unattended urbanisms like shared houses have great potential when it comes to updating the way we conceptualise the urban,

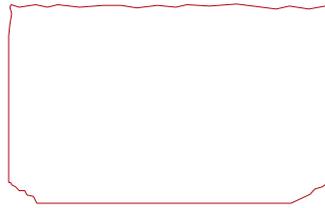


'FRAY FOAM HOME'. Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation. Palazzo della Esposizione, 12 Mostra Internazionale di Architettura de la Biennale di Venezia 2010.

S Chairs used in cultural activities and at events which contribute to making the Pavilion economically feasible.



T Stockpiling of a piece of marble to be used in the case of future need.



not so much as a quantitative but as a qualitative phenomenon.

What we were trying to do in 'FRAY FOAM HOME', which we presented in Venice, was to deliver a view of a specific home shared by four people in Madrid, attempting to make the way their life unfolds transparent in association with a number of distant landscapes that are activated by the things the four flat-mates and their small community do in their ordinary lives. When studied in detail, the infrastructures or landscapes that guarantee major supplies for the house – reservoirs, for example – are connected to it not only by means of pipes but also, and mainly, by activism, regulations, public concerns and controversies. Those connections make the link between the pieces composing this fragmented urbanism a political one. The actual web in which the fragments that make up our daily life gain continuity is political, not purely technical or disciplinary. What we were trying to do was raise this as an issue in the heart of the *Palazzo* and somehow generate conversations. We wanted people to say 'Oh, look! The lives of that small number of people depend on this large amount of water'. And then activate the discussions in which the water gets connected to the house.

Statically, your installation relates to mapping. Even though it isn't finished yet, it's immediately treated like a map. Mapping is an exceptionally exciting thing right now. It's exciting in both the analogical and the digital realms,

where more and more real-time maps can be consulted. At present the social network is one of the big things on the Internet, and a lot of today's artists and architects are interested in it. I was wondering if we could talk a little about some forms of mapping, also about mapping the relationships between people in space and about mapping in the 21st century.

Yeah. In maps like the one presented in the *Palazzo* at the Venice Biennale, or in the social mapping I've been doing over the last ten years, there's an underlying project for creating an alternative contemporary notion of 'precision'. Mapping tends to be related to making the depiction of reality accurate. But when you take into account some aspects of interior decoration, like wallpaper, illustration, cheap prints, photographic albums and displays, Christmas trees and TV shows or soap operas, you notice how these things also map reality.

Somehow, they are also maps. But they are maps that activate a different notion of 'precision'. They are not depicting exactly what daily life universally is, evacuating the possibility for variation, but rather establishing systems of references which every alteration in daily life will somehow have to confront. So it's not about collectively evacuating alternatives, but about providing a common referential system for alternatives to be confronted.

What potential do you feel actually exists in architectural space, as a realm of political arenas?

What are the potentials, you mean?

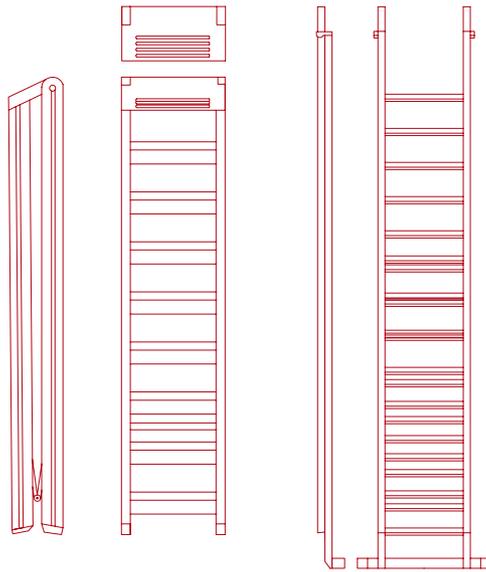
Yes.

Well, I think there is an opportunity to think of architectural space as the place where the tensions and divergences a society is made of are not only preserved or tolerated but also confronted as explicit and evolving components of

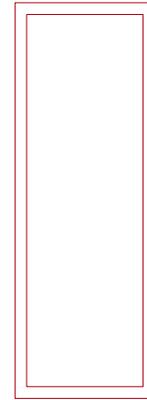


'FRAY FOAM HOME'. Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation. Palazzo della Esposizione, 12 Mostra Internazionale di Architettura de la Bienale di Venezia 2010.

U Ladders of different sizes used in cleaning and maintenance tasks



V Swinging door replaced due to breakage



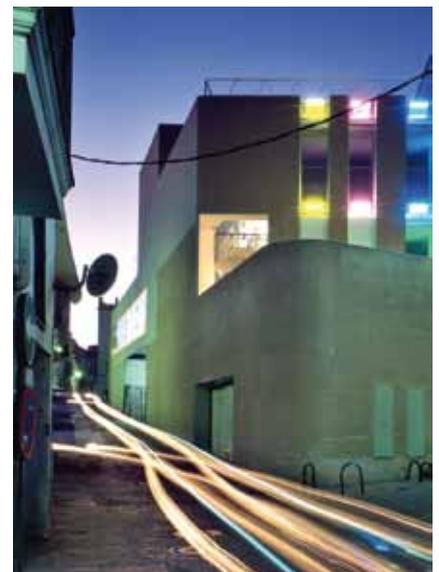
daily life. That, I think, could be a valuable outcome of architecture, and it's what I tried to produce in the 'Diocesan Clergy House' project in Plasencia or in the 'TUPPER HOMES' project. I think if we can contribute to the creation of situations in which a diversity of aesthetics, ideas, interests and concerns is not only represented but also confronted, somehow we will be contributing to the construction of a much more exciting and inclusive daily life.

And on the other hand, there are great potentials for rethinking the way things are spatially distributed: moving away from the account of people, groups, objects, and ideas as connected and organized as radiations from centurms to the account of them as agents in constellations of social assemblages. That's what I'm trying to do, and I think that it's a transformation of the way reality is mainly depicted and produced in which we can find opportunities to rethink the way architecture relates to other fields of activity like sociology, political sciences, activisms, narrative, marketing or art.

My next question is about Francis Pinari and his idea of going beyond disciplinary segregation and beyond the fear of pulling knowledge. Your methodology seems to be very transdisciplinary, and if you want to understand the forces of architecture and urbanism it's important to understand sciences, literature, music and art. How do you connect to all these disciplines? What is the connection to science, to arts, to music?

Well in my case, of course, these connections are not spontaneous but constructed and designed. When I started to work I saw that the possibility of being part of significant statements was directly related to the possibility of introducing risk into processes and personally being a professional designed to take risks. So on the one hand, in order to have a significant agenda you must be risky to some extent and engage in experiments the results of which are inevitably uncertain. On the other hand, if you want to have commissions you face demands to minimise the risk and deliver guarantees that your enunciations and statements will produce the desired effect. This is a conflict that very often has paralyzed or trivialized practices that initially were interesting.

I was very aware of the importance of designing a platform to work from and even designing a person who could manage this conflict and operate in it competitively. I decided to develop two offices: one is called the Office of Political Innovation and works as a laboratory in which a number of people come together from different backgrounds and disciplines (sociology, political sciences, ethnomethodology and anthropology, as well as people trained in graphic design, mapping and visualising abstract data, journalism, and advertising and marketing). What started as an informal network gradually became more formal as support, funding and commissions began to be forthcoming. Each of the members of the Office for

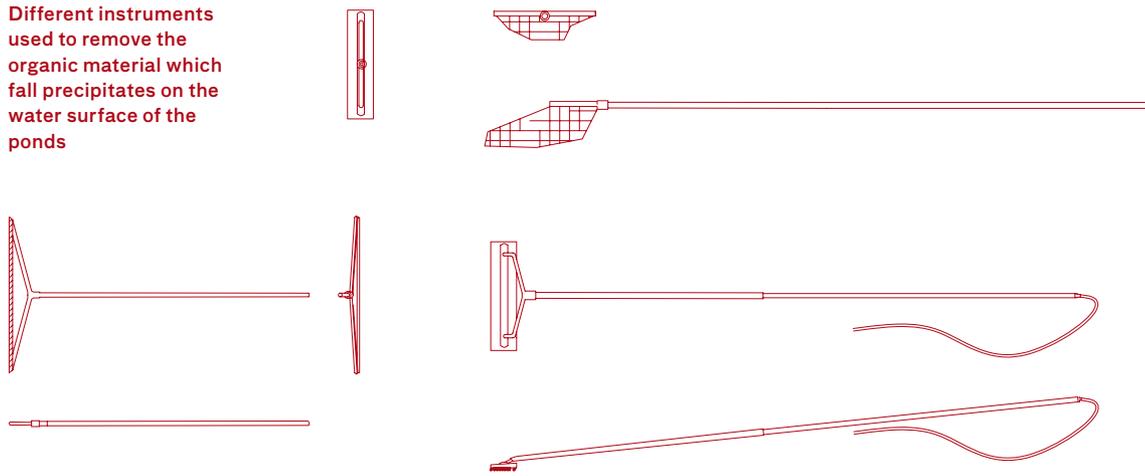


'Diocesan Clergy House'. Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation. Plasencia, 2004.



'TUPPER HOME'. Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation. Madrid, 2007.

W Different instruments used to remove the organic material which fall precipitates on the water surface of the ponds



Political Innovation could present the office as a lab directly inserted into his/her discipline and, at the same time, as a lab external to it. That way we could maximise the opportunities that risk assumption make possible but also the way we tried to construct the multidisciplinary platform you mentioned. It sounds complex, but now it feels quite natural because the net is already constructed and it's daily life for us.

And then there's Andrés Jaque Architects, which explores the outcome of the Office for Political Innovation and the basis it provides for reducing risk in required achievements.

You have two offices, Andrés Jaque Architects and the Office for Political Innovation, which seem somehow to be interconnected and interdependent. How do you these two offices work? Could we relate them to Rem Koolhaas's OMA and AMO?

In our case it was important to make the differences pretty explicit. Andrés Jaque Architects is a controlled-result oriented organization. It works like a factory. Everyone arrives more or less at the same time. We start at 9.30 in the morning and we spend all day long in the same building, with the name at the entrance. The Office for Political Innovation is something that works like a network of people living on four continents who participate sporadically, although they're always available to contribute to discussions, projects, research, videos, exhibitions, conferences or publications. The economies

are different as well. Andrés Jaque Architects is designed to make each work economically sustainable. The Office offsets the losses from unwanted or overworked projects with the profits from other works. And generally speaking the Office never evaluates research in terms of its economic prospects but rather of its subversive and destabilising potential. It's actually losing money all the time.

What I must say, though, is that they both share the same agenda and position. The Office isn't the innovation department of Andrés Jaque Architects; it's not that the Office explores and Andrés Jaque Architects applies. By being organized in different ways, they deliver different outcomes to the same agenda. But both produce and apply knowledge. And they're both organized to be transparent. That's an important point; neither platform ever carries out a project that isn't published. They're both totally connected in terms of interests, but the way projects are

socially constructed is managed entirely differently.

I have one last question for you. Rainer Maria Rilke wrote a book in which he gives advice to a young poet, and I was wondering what your advice would be to young architects today.

Well, my advice would be to have some confidence in the results of things they dare to start. I think this important for everyone, not just for architects. You mustn't expect foreseeable things or success from the very beginning. In my opinion, it's better just to start working and be happy discussing and analysing whatever result comes up. Even if they are catastrophic and radically different from the ones expected, it's important to know that bad results, if properly studied and discussed, can be much more valuable and productive than an expected success.

Well, thank you so much.

Thank you.



'House in Never Never Land'. Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation. Sant Josep, Ibiza, 2009.