

MONU

Domestic Urbanism

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What happens in domestic interiors appears to be very relevant for our societies. At least, that is what **Andrés Jaque** argues in our interview entitled **"The Home as Political Arena"** for this new issue of **MONU**. This issue, **"Domestic Urbanism"**, deals with the domestic aspects of cities, and everything that is related to the human home and habitat, the scale of the house, people's own universe, things that are usually hidden and private. According to **Jaque**, a great number of the processes by which our societies are shaped take place in domestic interiors, the domestic realm, and in relation to very domestic elements such as the table setting, the Christmas tree, or the TV remote control. **Justinien Tribillon** - in his contribution **"The Fridge, the City and the Critique of Everyday Life: a Tale of Domestic Urbanism"** - describes, for example, to what extent a domestic element such as the refrigerator has changed radically the way we consume the city. Because the domestic infiltrates the urban and, vice versa, the city leaks into the house, the city needs to be seen as a continuous fabric of differential intensities rather than a patchwork of enclosed categories that distinguish between private and public, house and city, or inside and outside. In her piece **"The Minor Composition of Threshold Domesticities"** **Lucía Jalón Oyarzun** explains how our private domestic spaces are becoming increasingly more public as demonstrated by **åyr**, an art collective that focuses on contemporary forms of domesticity and the effects of the internet on the city. In their contribution **"The Pavilion"** they feature photos of Airbnb apartments that were used as exhibition spaces during the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2014. That the internet plays a growing role in **"Domestic Urbanism"** is illustrated by the Rotterdam-based collective **Cookies** in their article **"A Nice Normal Little Village"**, showing how the digital machines of today might articulate our domestic lives tomorrow, based on their research into a care facility for elderly people on the outskirts of Amsterdam. In this facility the domestic environment of the patients is reconstructed retroactively, something which is not so

far removed from the simulated domestic environments on military training sites that **Ersela Kripa and Stephen Mueller (AGENCY)** refer to in their piece **"Domestic Insecurities"**. **Neeraj Bhatia and Christopher Roach** in their article **"Urbanism From Within"** show us how to re-imagine and re-think the domestic and the house as one of the smallest and most valuable urban units in order to create new affordable housing units. One solution would be to make use of the many illegal secondary units that exist within a city, such as hidden garages, attics, rear yards, or underutilized spaces of homes. That the needs of people and the relationship of people should to be placed at the centre of all actions while re-inventing and evolving the concept of the domestic and the home is emphasized by **Casco**, an office for art, design, and theory in their contribution **"A Short Guide through the Grand Domestic Revolution"** in which they explore the domestic sphere to imagine new forms of shared living and working. In order to prepare ourselves for a future that is once again in desperate need of a revolution in housing, the design of floor plans, and strategies for typologies, we need to end what **STAR strategies + architecture** describes as the "festival of facades". We need to dare remove the cover and observe with fresh and curious eyes what is happening behind and inside buildings and adapt the homes and the domestic spaces of people not merely to regulations, but to the diverse ways of life and especially the changing ways of life of the inhabitants, accentuating that the true revolution should happen indoors, as they point out in their piece **"The Interior of the Metropolis"**. Similarly, in our interview entitled **"Domesticity"**, **Herman Hertzberger** underlines the importance of the idea of a small and basic unit, which provides people the possibility - whether they are rich or poor - to turn their houses into what they want them to be, with a broad variety of options. Furthermore, he stresses that architects should stop being too concerned with aesthetics, but ought to create new paradigms with regard to domestic spaces rather than just thinking about creating nice forms.

The Home as Political Arena - Interview with Andrés Jaque

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How to Domesticate a City: Adaptive Tools to an Urban Environment

The Minor Composition of Threshold Domesticities

Redefining the Domestic between New Forms of Dwelling and Emerging Social Problems

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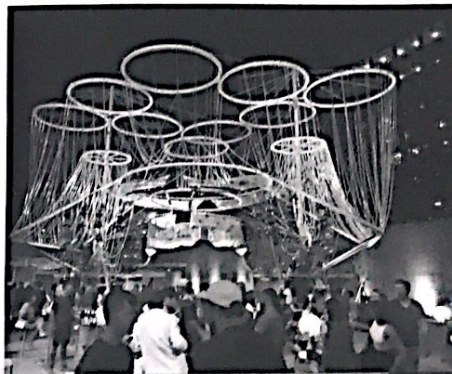
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IKEA Disobedients
Andrés Jaque / Office for Political
Innovation, Museum of Modern
Art, New York Architecture &
Design Purchase Fund (2012)

"I was interested in the way architecture could make the best of its role in the shaping of politics and how things that happen in domestic interiors are actually completely relevant for our societies."



COSMO MoMA PS1
Andrés Jaque / Office for Political
Innovation

"But often the particular architectural technologies then constitute the home, such as table-settings, laundry, Christmas trees, boilers, wallpapers, pets, garbage collection..."

The Home as Political Arena

Interview with Andrés Jaque

Bernd Upmeyer spoke with Spanish architect Andrés Jaque. His work explores the role architecture plays in the making of societies. In 2003 he founded the Office for Political Innovation, a trans-disciplinary agency engaged in creating an ordinary urbanism out of the combination of heterogeneous architectural fragments. Currently he is Advanced Design Professor at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation GSAPP Columbia University, and Visiting Professor at Princeton University SoA. The interview took place on February 9, 2016.

Christmas Trees and Remote Controls

Bernd Upmeyer: In 2010 during the Architecture Biennale in Venice, you explained to Hans Ulrich Obrist that you ended up being an architect due to very domestic experiences and interests in

things like interior decoration, Christmas trees, dinner-table settings, etc. What fascinated you about these very domestic aspects of cities?

Andrés Jaque: I was interested in the way architecture could make the best of its role in the shaping of politics and how things that happen in domestic interiors are actually completely relevant for our societies. A great number of the processes by which our societies are shaped happen in domestic interiors. The way we decide, for example, how to construct our gender or the way we relate to sexuality, education, or consumption. Within the domestic realm, a lot of things are addressed as practical daily life decisions, and that makes it the place where important aspects of our societies can be reconstructed as mundane ones. But often the particular architectural technologies then constitute the home, such as table-settings, laundry, Christmas trees, boilers, wallpapers, pets, garbage collection... are perceived as banal, decorative, or unimportant realities unrelated to politics. So, that

particular concern was my introduction to architecture. I wanted to know how architecture could participate in politics in particular, but through material and object-oriented politics. A very different approach to the one that at that time, the 1990s, was current among most architects. Political collective action was seen as something that happened mainly in the streets, squares, and public spaces, and not in the domestic areas of life. The role-play of architecture was mainly perceived as a very passive one, just hosting or containing protest, but architectural devices in themselves were not perceived as actors contributing to the collective making of politics.

BU: When a lot of political activities and actions are happening within domestic spaces, what is still happening in the streets? Are the streets becoming less important? Is it all about interiors these days?

AJ: I think that there is collusion but also a certain friction between what happens in the streets and what hap-

pens indoors, and what happens off-line and on-line. But I would suggest that the realm of domesticity is not that much acknowledged when you think, for instance, of the *Arab Spring*. There, the role of squares was highlighted by everyone. The squares became famous and extremely popular. But it was not appreciated that nothing would have happened there without the activities and collaborations that took place at the home, where people watching TV or interacting online from their sofas were in fact scaling up to what happened in the squares. So, I would suggest that material politics, the collaboration between heterogeneous technologies, and domesticity are in fact hidden aspects of architecture. And precisely because of that, it is important to reclaim and acknowledge these elements, ideally developing a theory that makes the best out of them, and help include them into architectural practices. This is necessary because the way the urban and the domestic are designed tends to be terribly naïve, when seen

from these perspectives. We did, for example, the *'IKEA Disobedients'* project, precisely because we thought that Ikea was contributing to a kind of denial of well-known political facts embedded in domestic interiors by insisting on the idea that homes were a kind of politically independent reign, the "Independent Republic of your Home".

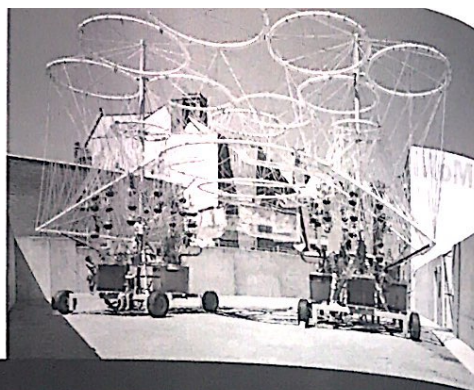
BU: In the interview with Obrist you described a very domestic object, the TV remote control, as a device that turns living rooms into parliaments of daily life. How does such a device, but also the TV itself, introduce aspects of the contemporary city and the general culture into the homes of people and impact the way people live in them? You already mentioned some of the aspects and impacts, but could you explain the concept of 'parliaments of daily life' a bit more?

AJ: Architectural devices not only work politically as billboards. They produce, or contribute to, specific forms of political interaction. I love the case of TV remote con-

trols, because they make available choice and prompt discussions. Remote controls make it easy to explain what are some of the ways in which material devices prompt politics. There is now widespread interest in considering architecture as a practice that shapes interaction. This is often seen in the addition of extra technological equipment. For instance, in Frank Gehry's *Opus Hong Kong* luxurious apartment building, in order to enhance the capacity of the apartment users to intensify their relationship with Hong Kong environments, additional electronic equipment has been introduced into every bedroom. But it is the whole of architecture, and not only those extras, that defines the nature of the relationship between the residents and the Hong Kong environment. We can learn from cases like this, that architecture is already experiencing an important shift: from seeing itself as a space-making discipline, to understanding that it lies within its capacity to design relationships. But at the same time, the addi-

"Domesticity for me is very fragmented and overlaps with my work, with my academic life."

COSMO MoMA PS1
Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation. Photo: Miguel de Guzmán / ImagenSubliminal.com



"Sunday at home" on Andrés Jaque's facebook page
Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation

Background: Instagram andrés_jaque, November 1, 2015: DCTV: andrés_jaque Please welcome Dali Parton (Salvador + Dolly). Great night at @storefrontnyc Critical Halloween! !!!! Thanks @rutgerhauberts for the great pic!! With @ivanlopezmunuera #salvadorali #dollyparton: hwanetoe top-notch costume by @ivanlopezmunuera! alexmartinezmolinero Jaja estás genial @andrés_jaque, abrazos!

tion strategy shows that as a discipline architecture struggles to understand that it is through walls, pipes, doors, windows, ramps, elevators, meters, and not necessarily extra electronic technologies, that it intervenes in the social. Having said that, it is also true that digital technologies are introducing new possibilities of interaction and that we no longer live exclusively in an offline world but one constituted in which the on- and offline cooperate.

BU: Technological devices are becoming increasingly important in domestic spaces, however architects are not involved in designing them. What is left for them to do?

AJ: That is a very good question. The first thing needed now is to acknowledge that, at this point, no single discipline can work in isolation. If we, architects, want to make significant contributions, I believe we need to collaborate with others. We see ourselves as designers of spaces, but we often do much more than that. By working in multidisciplinary platforms, we can in-

crease the capacity of projects to gain social relevance. Our office team not only includes architects, but also sociologists, economists and journalists. It makes it possible for us to rethink what tools we use. When we produced, for instance, the *Cosmo* installation at MoMA's PS1 Museum, it was important for us to bring together a living platform of experts (Arup, BAC, Jochen Scheerer), institutions (such as the Brooklyn Botanical Garden or NYU), and a great deal of different people that contributed to the complexity of the device we were designing. This way of bringing symmetry between the realities we intervene in, and the team with which we intervene in them, is becoming part of our cultural and political agenda and keeps us rethinking what our tools are.

Extensions of the Domestic

BU: In July of last year you posted a picture of the interior of your apartment on your facebook page under the title "Sunday at home". What does

it mean to you to publicly present your home, your very private universe, something that is usually closed to the public?

AJ: I think that these days the limits of domesticity are blurred. If we asked different people what their domestic life is like, we would sense how difficult it is for them to come up with a response to that question. Domesticity for me is very fragmented and overlaps with my work, with my academic life. My life is, for instance, divided between Madrid and New York City. A way of living that is not rare these days, but that nevertheless requires a number of calibrations in the way I relate to others. Over the past few years a great number of technologies have helped to develop trans-urban lives like the one I am describing. From banking services to gotomeeting, this way of living is becoming a niche for consumption, for politics, and for cultural evolution. Social media is equally contributing to redesigning the limits between domesticity and other realms for social interaction (such as work, sex,

or academics). New manners and urbanities are emerging. I would not post private pictures with my friends on my website though, but I do not mind doing that on social media, such as *Instagram* or *facebook*, because these are places where things overlap and where the interactions between different locations become visible and where we are collectively learning to negotiate their limits.

BU: Today, only around a third of the people, at least in the Western World, live in typical families. However, houses did not adjust, as so often in the past, to the changing lifestyles of people and a changing society that becomes ever more diverse and mobile and in which people are participating more and more in the sharing economy. What should homes, apartments, and houses look like today to adjust to these changing conditions? And what kind of domesticity has to be produced in relation to these changes?

AJ: The way residential realities are constructed entails the coordination of transfor-

mations operating at diverse scales. From the scale in which water is collected, to the tiny scale of the glass of water many people place by their beds. Or from the global flows of money, to the development of micro apartments to make up for the over-inflated cost of land. This multi-scale condition of domesticity reveals a very high degree of heterogeneity. We have been working on multi-residential schemes that made the best of their capacity to articulate different levels of social aggregation. From the individual to the neighbours in the apartment next door, to core communities, to imbricated networks defined by common activities (such as running, taking care of pets, or spending time outdoors). In our housing scheme for Väsby in Sweden, we faced a very specific challenge: how to move from the idea of a collection of apartments with staircases and elevators to something that, working as an onion, could empower a great variety of social constructions of different sizes, simultaneously hosted by its architec-

"The second thing that is important, in my opinion, is to acknowledge that a number of things that we consider part of domestic life are very much happening on online platforms these days."

ture. The second thing that is important, in my opinion, is to acknowledge that a number of things that we consider part of domestic life are very much happening on online platforms these days. Sex, for instance, is very much now part of networks constructed in association with online spaces such as Snapchat, Tinder, Grindr, Pornhub. Since this is happening, it needs to be taken into consideration.

BU: How do we have to imagine a project that is organized according to the "onion" principle, as you call it, on the inside? What do the apartments look like? Are they changing as well?

AJ: When I mention the onion I speak of a particular concept. But, yes, the apartment needs to be transformed too. We explored that problem in the "*Rolling House for the Rolling Society*". The idea was to acknowledge that homes were being constructed, accumulating difference. And that encountering difference, rather than familiarity, was a value that people sharing homes with strang-

Background: Instagram andrés_jaque, October 18, 2015: Riverside Park and 72nd. andrés_jaque Sunday morning with Robert Crumb, piarpinchart A big glass of water, scarletzimmermann @erretabar, erretabar @scarletzimmermann ivanlopezmunuera #robertcrumb



Self-Centering Housing Compound, Västerås, Sweden
Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation

Visor de Urbanizing

"In that way we proposed to rethink the idea of urban interaction and urban centrality: no longer based exclusively on simplified notions of commerce, but on a richer notion of the transactional."

"Certainly, some funny things can happen. In some houses we showed people walking around in their underwear or even naked without really considering their roommates as their friends."

Rolling House for the Rolling Society
Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation. Prototype. Photo: Miguel de Guzmán / ImagenSubliminal.com



ers (a growing reality in most European cities) were finding beneficial. We designed, for instance, something that we called the "Reversible Home". We envisioned that one part of the apartment, at a certain time of the day, could be connected to the interior of the apartment and at another time be connected to the outside. If at some point someone wanted to work teaching at home, for instance, the reversible room would help doing that. Another thing that we included in another project was the capacity to have satellite rooms in an apartment for people that come along but need to be with you for a limited time only. In general terms, I believe that it is necessary to develop architecture that allows for making houses adaptable to changing needs and requirements.

BU: To what extent can a rather small urban unit, such as an apartment, transform a city or have an effect on a city?

AJ: Recently, we were finalist in the project Reinventer Paris, where we proposed a

new way of thinking about urban centrality. At a time when most city-centres are becoming boring open-air shopping malls we believed it was possible to create vibrant central areas with an intensification of ordinary interpersonal interaction. In that way we proposed to rethink the idea of urban interaction and urban centrality: no longer based exclusively on simplified notions of commerce, but on a richer notion of the transactional.

Feeling at Home in the Contemporary Metropolis

BU: We would like to talk in a bit more detail about some of your projects, because some of them relate very closely to the topic of "Domestic Urbanism". In your 2003 project entitled "Techno-Geisha", a techno-host changes her clothes to make it possible for people to feel at home in the contemporary metropolis. That project seems to be created for a society where people are increasingly mobile and where short stays are more and more common.

How might we understand that project?

AJ: Yes, it is like that. Feeling at home is not something that you find only in your place, but something that can be constructed through particular modes of personal interaction. We considered this project a good way to test the possibility of architecture to create such constructions of situations, rather than creating a fixed space. We wanted to emphasize that such constructions of feelings are occurring every day in probably many homes and that such constructions are part of architecture.

BU: Earlier you mentioned the "Rolling House for the Rolling Society" project that you designed for a city where people share homes and do not stop moving around the territory. Could you explain this project a bit more? What kind of houses were created there?

AJ: It was an experiment that we did in association with a number of industrial corporations specialized in the provision of domestic construction elements, such as blinds,

wallpapers, tiles. We started working with a number of firms to face the challenge that homes were no longer used merely by families, but by - so to speak - conglomerates of non-familiar people sharing apartments. We tried to explore the potential of these new lifestyles in terms of organization but also in terms of material development. We developed different constructive elements produced by commonly used materials and manufacturing processes. For instance, GRC technical floors are adequate for residential apartments. We tried to create a space that could facilitate intensive interactions. One idea was to create the living room as a space for interactions that could open up to a space for communal life. So, everything became very open and accessible to everyone. But we included other elements of the apartment - such as the furniture or storage rooms - in that concept of an expandable living area. All of these innovations were based on a one year-long research project that we did while ex-

amining many different types of shared apartments around the world, trying to understand the strategies that were making them innovative. We thought about how we could make it possible that homes that were designed for families could be used in a different way, and for a different kind of community.

BU: How were these technical floors, that are usually used in office buildings, used in the apartments exactly? Like an infrastructure that allows you to plug in your apartment facilities? How does that work?

AJ: Yeah, it works like that. But, unlike in the case of office buildings, there were no technicians needed to adjust things. Because there was no budget for a janitor or housekeeper. Thus, we designed this technical floor in a way that it was easy to use and to maintain for everyone. That is also why we built the elements very strong but at the same time very light, in order that people could use them easily.

BU: And how do you connect,

for example, a bathtub, a shower, or the kitchen to that floor while remaining flexible?

AJ: They have flexible tubes. Basically everything can be moved quickly and easily, like pieces of furniture. We also thought about creating intimate corners and areas where people can withdraw to. We considered that a necessity when sharing, for example, your apartment with people who you are not close with. Because at the end of the day, you can easily live quite intimately with some people and share things that you would not even share with your friends. Certainly, some funny things can happen. In some houses we showed people walking around in their underwear or even naked without really considering their roommates as their friends. They probably would not even do that in front of their friends. So the freestanding and moveable bathtubs in the centre of an apartment were provoking and constructing very particular relationships among the people. To show how different those apartments were and to reveal their potential, we cre-

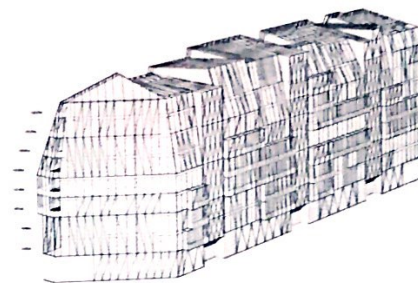
"In a way, we were acknowledging that domesticity was not produced only through typological design or even the constructive design, but that it was also produced in the media and through interactions that are happening online."

Rolling House for the Rolling Society
Andrés Jaque / Office for Political
Innovation. Prototype. Photo: Miguel de
Guzmán / ImagenSubliminal.com



"I believe that architecture is now a trans-media activity."

Networked Domesticities Habitation, Triangle École-
Évangile, 19ème arrondissement, Paris
2nd Prize, Andrés Jaque/ Office for Political
Innovation (with Christian Becher) (2016)



ated a lot of provocative images.

The Role of Architects in Designing Domesticities

BU: I would like to go back to your "IKEA Disobedients" project that you mentioned at the beginning. On your website, it is presented as a material installation and performance on politically-activated, non-familiar domesticities. Could you explain this project a bit more in general, and in particular to what kind of non-familiar domesticities you are referring?

AJ: We did the *IKEA Disobedients* project right after the *Rolling House for the Rolling Society*. In a way, we were acknowledging that domesticity was not produced only through typological design or even the constructive design, but that it was also produced in the media and through interactions that are happening online. Furthermore, we identified Ikea as probably the strongest contemporary agent in the production of domesticity. You probably know that its catalogue is translated

into more languages than the bible and printed in vast numbers. But we realized that the way it advertised and promoted domesticity did have little to do with the domesticity that we found in our case studies. Two things were especially important to us: one was that domesticity was depicted in a kind of Saturday-morning family atmosphere, which is indeed the reality in some homes, but not in all, and not all the time. So, there are many other things that take place in apartments and in domestic spaces that were not included in the catalogue: for example, a community that produces a domesticity that is not necessarily based on the typical family. The second important lack, to our mind, was a domesticity that is produced in spaces that are not family-oriented, where you do not know all the people, and where things are not predictable. These unfamiliar places can be spaces of innovation. In such spaces people bond through science, politics, or through design, for example. However, such spaces and domestic situations cannot be

found in the Ikea commercials or catalogues. So, we thought it important to challenge the idea of domesticity that was presented by Ikea, because most of us live among, and are constantly surrounded by, furniture of Ikea. That is why we hired a photographer and created this performance and called it *IKEA Disobedients*. What we did was that we collected a certain number of critics to provide evidence. We provided evidence that non-familiar domesticities were actually quite common in houses. One case I really loved was a house occupied by lesbian women in the centre of Madrid. In some cases, people even transformed their bodies and their genders there. So, I believe that there is a possibility for architects and architecture to intervene, not only through the direct design of spaces but also through designing the presence of architecture in media leading to conversations and discussions. This *IKEA* project was very interesting to me.

BU: Your example shows that

architects can and should be much more involved in media design.

AJ: I think we have to understand the way architecture is produced today and make this more public by convincing clients and public institutions. I believe that architecture is now a *trans-media* activity.

BU: With all your experience with housing projects and the domestic aspects of cities, how do you think we should house ourselves in the future? What will and should future floor plans and typologies look like? And to what extent will changes in our cities have an influence on our homes and the way we live in the future?

AJ: I would not know what is going to happen. But if the question was: what is the role of architecture in the future? - I do believe that architecture has had a very valuable tradition of political and urban values, but I think that now and in the coming years we have to make an effort to transform our tools so that those values can be part of the future too. Because what is for sure, is

that in the future we have to coordinate increasingly between different realms, different technologies, and different design processes to make sure that architecture can continue its valuable tradition. I will try to contribute to make that happen.

Andrés Jaque is a Spanish architect. His work explores the role architecture plays in the making of societies. In 2003 he founded the Office for Political Innovation, a trans-disciplinary agency engaged in the creation of an ordinary urbanism out of the combination of heterogeneous architectural fragments. In 2014 he won the Silver Lion for the Best Research Project at the 14th Venice Biennale directed by Rem Koolhaas. He is Advanced Design Professor at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation GSAPP, Columbia University, and Visiting Professor at Princeton University SoA. He has been Tessenow Stipendiat 1998 at the Alfred Toepfer Stiftung FVS, in Hamburg, and visiting professor at a number of international universities. He has lectured extensively throughout the world including at the Eidgenössische

Technische Hochschule in Zurich, MIT (Boston), Instituto Politecnico di Milano, Centre International pour la Ville de Paris, Centre pour l'Architecture et le Paysage (Brussels), Sociedad Central (Buenos Aires), Berlage Institut (Rotterdam), and the Museo Nacional (Bogotá).

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.

Thanks to Filippo Foschi for helping to prepare and to transcript this interview.