field:

Urban Blind Spots

6

ISSN: 1755-068

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Introduction

Welcome to field: the free journal for the discussion of critical, theoretical, political and playful perspectives on all aspects of architecture. field: is an international peer-reviewed journal and an open electronic forum.

It was established to make architectural discourse and research available to, and aware of, the widest possible field.

We are committed to being open and free with regards to our process and structure. field: plans to produce special issues devoted to particular themes with guest editors. Submissions are invited.

How to Submit

field: is interested in contributions in a variety of formats including academic articles, book and film reviews, interviews, photo essays and other experimental modes of representation. All contributions must be presented in English and should not have been published or submitted for publication in another forum in the UK. Translations of work published in languages other than English crediting details of previous publication will be considered.

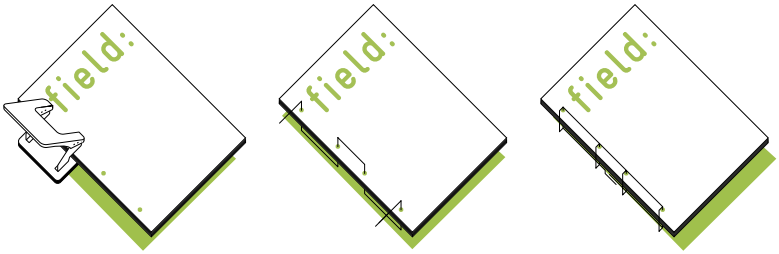
For further information on field: and how to submit please visit www.field-journal.org

All contributions should be electronically submitted to field@sheffield.ac.uk

Postal address:
field:
School of Architecture
Arts Tower Western Bank
Sheffield S10 2TN

How to Print and Bind

Sewn Japanese Binding



ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Urban Blind Spots
field: volume 6, issue 1 (November 2014)

Editorial

Articles

Notes on Contributors

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Urban Blind Spots

Editorial

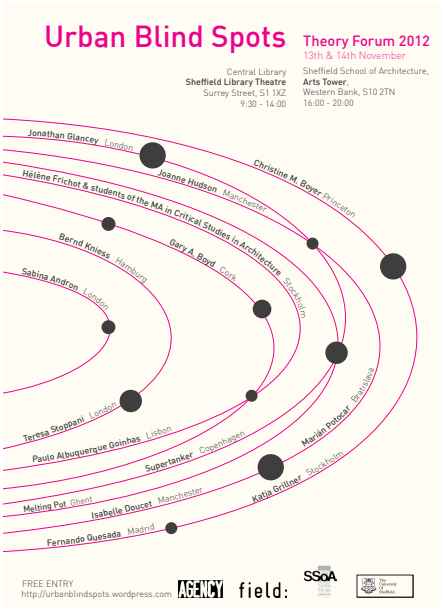
Florian Kossak, Tatjana Schneider and Stephen Walker

field: URBAN BLIND SPOTS brings together a range of authors from different disciplines, academia and practice, exploring and discussing various notions of blind spots in relation to cities and the way they are produced, used, perceived and portrayed. It presents something of a testing ground through which multi-faceted manifestations and understandings of blind spots in cities are observed, explored and theorized.

This collection of essays grew out of a conference[1] we ran as part of the M.Arch and Postgraduate teaching programme at the School of Architecture, University of Sheffield and evolved from a lecture series we give for Year 3 and Masters students called Urban (Hi)stories. Motivated by questioning narrow definitions of cities that continue in circulation within architectural education and practice, the lecture series engages with transforming the ways in which, or the tools with which, both citizens and architects might understand cities more broadly. It investigates the dialectic between alleged 'subjective' and 'objective', of the position of the amateur and the professional, and tests the portrayal of the former against the orthodoxy of the latter. In doing so, it sets out to expand the geographical and cultural range of cities encountered by architectural students, developing tools and ways of seeing that allow their application or translation to any city, which in turn leads to a widened understanding, revealing hidden layers, and telling other stories of these 'familiar' places.

The conference continued these ambitions: it drew together presentations that actively brought together a variety of inter-disciplinary approaches, deployed as part of a developing attitude towards the analysis and portrayal of cities, approaches that go beyond the 'usual' survey methodologies used by architecture and urbanism. By focusing on the

[1] This event— the 'Theory Forum'— has in previous years given rise to **field:** 1 to 5.



'unusual' or 'atypical' we hoped to achieve greater appreciation of the existence, range and 'nature' of what we tend to overlook or blend out when writing and talking about cities in the broadest sense. This shift of focus to the things and objects that are normally overlooked – we called them blind spots – was seen as a space of possibility that offers opportunity for other readings and interpretations.

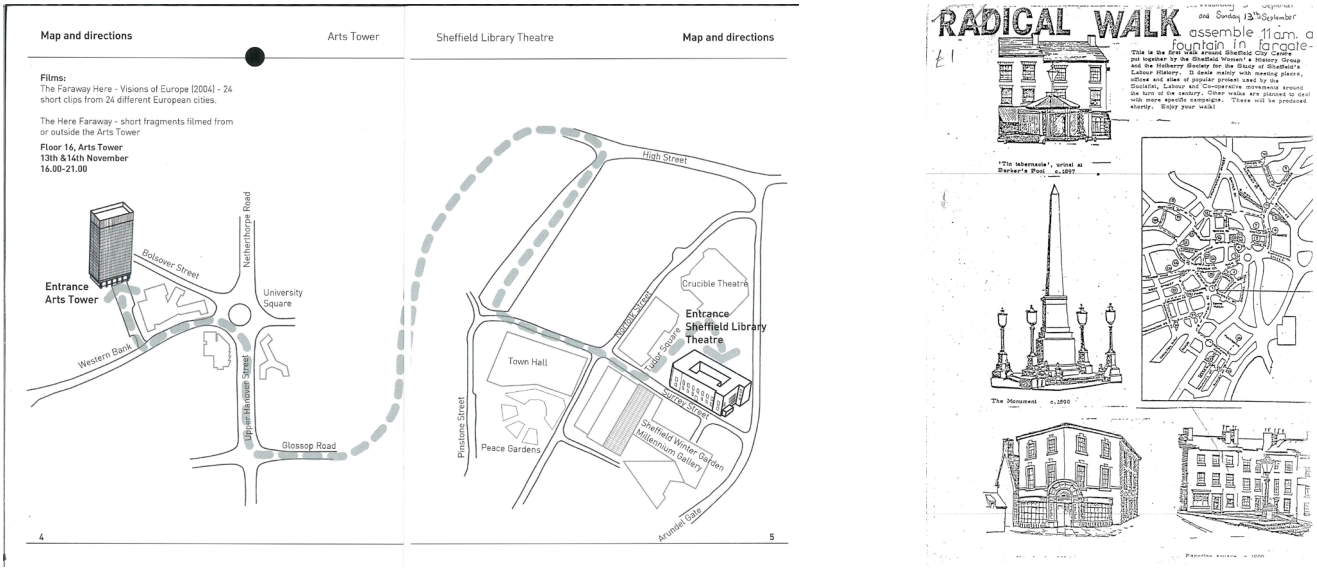


Fig. 1. Directions and route map from the *Theory Forum* programme, and the original 'Radical Walk' tour, reenacted during the Theory Forum

Enacting this shift, we left the university and our 'ivory tower' and staged the conference in different spaces in the city and took it into the city itself. A series of walks moved participants of the conference to political meeting places, offices and sites of popular protest used by the Socialist, Labour and Co-operative movements from the turn of the 20thcentury, or to places where Sheffield music was made – "from the terraced house where ABC first shimmied to the front room where Warp first bleeped".[2] Beyond this, the programme combined academic presentations with round table discussion, eating, reading groups and exhibitions.

Some of the academic presentations found their way into this issue of field.

With a nod to Perec and Benjamin before him, Gary A. Boyd's article entitled *Rent: prostitution and the Irish Apartment Block*, pays close attention to the unforeseen consequences of the speculative apartment building boom in Ireland. In combination with the rapid growth of the Internet, Boyd argues that legislative, material and real-estate blindspots were creatively exploited in ways that significantly changed the spatial practices of prostitution.

[2] http://sheffieldpublicitydepartment.blogspot.co.uk/ —Sheffield Music City walk led by Tom James from the Sheffield Publicity Department

In *A Monument and a Blindspot – On the Precarious State of Modernist Architecture in Bratislava*, Marián Potočár discusses a blind spot in plain view: 'Námestie slobody' — the 'Freedom Square' in the centre of Bratislava – which is related to the cycles of construction and reconstruction blown by the winds of architectural fashion and political favour.

The two articles that follow both grew out of significant and sustained collaborative teaching projects at KTH Stockholm and Hafencity University Hamburg respectively. Multi-authored and multi-vocal, *Urban Biopower Stockholm and the Biopolitics of Creative Resistance*, Hélène Frichot and Sara Vall with Sara Brolund De Carvalho, Döne Delibas, Oskar Gudehn, Matilde Kautsky, Anna Kulin, Katla Maríudóttir, Alistair Nancarrow and Malena Norlin discuss the deployment of feminist design power tools in order to emphasise different voices, relations and subjectivities in the mapping and discussion of environments.

Why should one care about such a shack and its final five years? Assembled and edited by Bernd Kniess and Ben Pohl with contributions from Monika Alovjanovic, Benjamin Becker, Aron Bohmann, Sebastian Bührig, Maria Burkhardt, Stefanie Graze, Charlotte Herbst, Katrin Hovy, Tabea Michaelis, Meghan McAllister, and Hans Vollmer, this article presents the University of the Neighbourhoods, a project that oscillated between education, research, design and practice, as a point of departure for discussing and re-considering contemporary practices of planning and urban design as well as the role of education.

In *Deleuze's Fold as Urban Strategy*, Francesco Sebregondi runs a theoretical exposition of Gilles Deleuze's philosophical considerations alongside an account of the redevelopment plans for Highgate Estate in London, arguing that references to such sites as 'voids' emasculates their complex operation and contribution to the city. Instead, Sebregondi suggests that the operation of such voids needs a more nuanced understanding if they are to withstand simple appropriation by the forces of capital and real-estate development.

Finally, in *Relational Architecture: Dense Voids and Violent Laughters*, Teresa Stoppani also addresses the notion of the void, providing a sustained engagement within the blindspot set out and theorised particularly by Georges Bataille. Re-reading work by Peter Eisenman and Rem Koolhaas, Stoppani offers a sustained meditation on the architectural void.

The essays are framed by a postscript, written by us – the editors of this volume – where we argue that one needs urban, social and economic blind spots for culturally and socially innovative forms of activity, practice and critique to happen. But, of course, the question at hand is about whether

the focus on blind spots, the making visible of that which was previously invisible, will essentially and forever eradicate those blind spots' inherent qualities and positive contribution to the urban. Can we create designs, structures, spaces that are open enough to accommodate, with or without our knowledge, blind spots? By analysing blind spots carefully, are they enhanced or hampered or destroyed? Is this a well-meaning but naïve project and should we rather just leave them alone?

Acknowledgements: The **Urban Blind Spots** conference, on which this issue of **field:** is based, was conceived and organised by Florian Kossak, Tatjana Schneider and Stephen Walker. We are grateful to the University of Sheffield for financial support in the form of a *Methodological Innovation Fund* grant. Thanks to our fellow Agents at Sheffield for support and chairing of the sessions, to Dovile Botyriute, Elizabeth Dodwell and Alexander E. Maxwell for organisational help; to James Dacre, Kerry Dragon and Neill Grant for technical support; and to all the fifth year and PGT students who engaged so fully in the symposium and debate. We would also like to thank Richard Beeby, Sheffield Library Theatre and Events Manager, Tikka Masala Restaurant, Walkley, Mark Parsons and Adam Park.

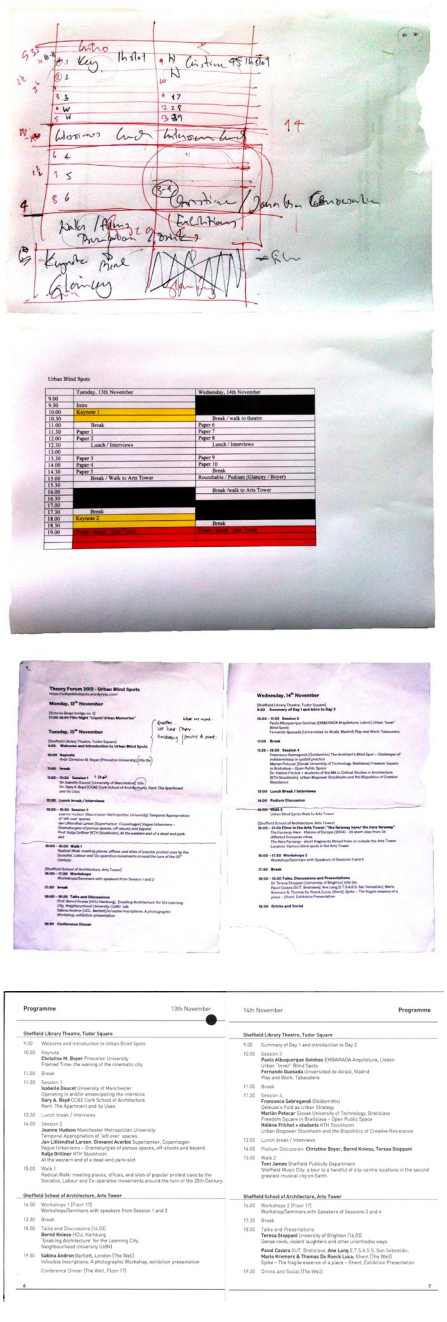


Fig. 2. The **Urban Blind Spots** programme takes shape, with input from many helpers

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Rent: prostitution and the Irish Apartment Block

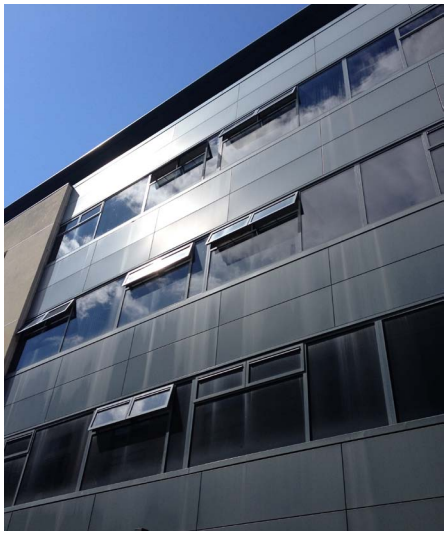
Gary A. Boyd

In 1974, pursuing his interest into the infra-ordinary – 'the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the back-ground noise, the habitual' – Georges Perec wrote about an idea for a novel:

> 'I imagine a Parisian apartment building whose façade has been removed ... so that all the rooms in the front, from the ground floor up to the attics, are instantly and simultaneously visible'.

Borrowing methods from Perec to move somewhere between conjecture, analysis and documentation, this paper interrogates the late twentieth-century speculative apartment block and its position within the city of Dublin in particular. Apartment comes from the Italian appartare meaning 'to separate'. The space of the boundary between activities is reduced to a series of intimately thin lines: the depth of a floor, a party wall, a window, the convex peep-hole in a door, or the façade that Perec seeks to render invisible. The apartness of the apartment is accelerated when aligned with short-term tenancies: the paper will pay particular attention to the impact this real estate separation and location has had on practices of prostitution that are now supported by online 'retailing'.

It is a building like many others, an apartment block built in the late twentieth-century, with a commercial ground floor, basement car-parking and above street level, five storeys of domestic accommodation. It is located within a kilometre of the general post office, the designated centre of this provincial Irish city, in a site in a lane once occupied by a garage. The block was designed as part of a larger scheme and stretches with its service court/car park across the former garage's curtilage to front another street – this time a busy thoroughfare – with a larger commercial premises, a bank.



The planning drawings submitted to the local council show that the block contains thirty-six apartments, nine per floor, made up of one studio unit, five one bedroom units and three two bedroom units. These are accessed by two stair cores at either end of the building (one entered from the street and one from the rear courtyard/car-park) and a central, double-loaded corridor which, excepting the two end units, renders each apartment single-aspect – either courtyard facing or street facing. Of the creamish-coloured street façade, the profusion of expansion joints make it look as though it has been systemically assembled from pre-fabricated concrete panels. In fact, it consists of a concrete block cavity wall whose smooth render has been indented with seemingly random trowel cuts. There are also organic degradations, the black staining of water-damage from misfiring sills and patches of grey-green mould. Other, designed articulations on the façade include plastic weep-holes; shallow, circular ventilation ducts; and occasionally, the more forceful outward thrust of some retro-fitted ventilation system that must belie a generic fault, as it pokes itself abruptly through every unit's exterior wall. The apartments at the two extremities of the block have balconies of approximately 2 x 1.5 metres, pushed back into the building. The rest of the balconies (twenty-four in number, front and back) are bolted on.

In the two bedroomed apartment nearest the stair-core on the street-side, the floor to ceiling glazed window of the living room was a mere 6.2 metres from my office. From 2008 to 2012, operating in an irregular temporal pattern of periods of absence of weeks or even months, a sex-worker occupied this apartment, often sitting at the window in the time in between her clients. When she was working, she closed the curtains. In 2012, a series of counter-prostitution measures was launched across the island of Ireland, initiated jointly by the police authorities of its two jurisdictions. Of the hundred or so so-called brothels raided, most were in domestic premises with a significant proportion in apartment blocks.

Until the economic boom beginning in the decade before the millennium, the apartment block was a minor architectural typology in the built environment of Ireland. In 1905, the journal the Irish Builder described the newly completed Earlsfort Mansions the 'solitary example of the residential flat in Dublin for people of means'[1]. For much of the nineteenth

[1] McManus, R. 'Suburban and urban housing in the twentieth century in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*. (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy. Vol. 111C, 2011: 253-286).

and twentieth century, the idea of living in multiple occupancy dwellings was associated with the hardship and penury of working class life. This was epitomised by the slums found on the north side of the city of Dublin. Here, a high density of occupation was realised not through the construction of new buildings but by the appropriation of existing 18th and 19th-century fabric. These former town-houses of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy were subdivided into multiple units, sometimes containing just one room. The association of this area with poverty was paralleled by the reputation of a small section of it – called the Monto – as an area of vice and prostitution. James Joyce characterised it as 'Nighttown' in *Ulysses*. In the 1940s the area's nemesis, a Catholic reformer named Frank Duff, wrote a series of retrospective exposés on the area for the journal of the Legion of Mary. Both writer and reformer defined the Monto similarly as a space of inversions – night instead of day, feminine in contrast to masculine, etc. They also described its spatial characteristics in terms of the uncanny, tracing moments of appropriation where original purposes gave way to other uses, where domestics buildings became porous and public and private space intertwined. Ground floor hallways often became shortcuts between parallel streets, opening up a myriad of route-ways so that edges of private space did not begin at the front door of a house but instead blocks of tenements became publically penetrable[2]. Joyce's

[2] Boyd, G. A. *Dublin 1745-1922: Hospitals, Spectacle and Vice*. (Dublin: Four Courts, 2006)

description of 'flimsy houses with gaping doors'[3] simultaneously sexualised these distortions and mapped them on to architectural details, implying that the availability of intercourse was both emblematised within and realised through elements of threshold in the built fabric. Duff was similarly interested in these elements. He described ordinary doors in shabby streets as unexpectedly opening up into magnificent and opulent rooms, 'a whirlwind of life ... a horrible glamour' which often imitated the decorative trends of Parisian brothels.[4]

Whatever the veracity of these descriptions, anxiety about the apparent spatial and social ambiguities of communal working class life continued long after the activities of the Monto and other such areas had been extinguished. In the 1930s, in the debates surrounding the development of suitable social housing types, the Catholic Church in Ireland denounced apartment blocks as 'vehicles of immorality'. Apart from a small number of luxury examples built mainly on the south-side of Dublin in the 1960s and 70s, the private apartment block did not emerge in any numbers until the property boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s.[5,6] Until about the same period, prostitution in the capital and other urban areas had established itself mainly as an ephemeral, street-based practice, latterly dependent on visual (rather that verbal or tactile) soliciting and the use of the motorcar. This essay begins to consider some of the cultural and spatial factors that have articulated a coincidence between the architecture of the apartment block and a contemporary practice of prostitution in Ireland. It oscillates between subjective and particular perspectives to broader territories and contexts, seeking other historic moments where the apartment building has been forensically examined and connected to issues of gender, commodification and the ambiguities between private and public space. Accordingly, the essay involves the paradigm of Paris where the 19th-century city was built under similar conditions of financial speculation. New types of urbanity and the development of the apartment block here realised new spaces of sexual practices and transaction. The writings of George Perec as well as the techniques – shared with Walter Benjamin as well as Duff and Joyce – of micro-examining the codified material culture of everyday space, become part of a sensibility towards an urban blind spot and a negotiation between subjective physical, empirical and theoretical readings.

Writing in 1974, in a essay entitled 'Species of Spaces', Perec explored a series of nestling, overlapping scales of occupation and representation. These moved from the physical intimacy of the written page to the scope of the world before resting, in its terminal pages, on a series of unaffiliated meditations entitled 'space'. Towards the mid-point of the essay, in the section entitled, 'The Apartment Building', the author sketched out an idea for a novel:

3 Joyce. J. *Ulysses* (London: Bodley Head, 1922/1960).

4 Duff, F. in *Maria Legionis: The Organ of the Legion of Mary*. (Dublin, 1939)

5 McManus, R. (2011) op.cit.

6 Prunty, J. 'Residential urban renewal schemes, Dublin 1986-1994', in *Irish Geography* 28(2). 1995: 131-149.

> 'I imagine a Parisian apartment building whose façade has been removed ... so that all the rooms in the front, from the ground floor up to the attics, are instantly and simultaneously visible' (Perec 1974: 40).

Life A User's Manual (1978) is the consummation of this précis.[7] Here, Perec negotiates and measures patterns of existence within a single apartment block, room by room. He does this with an archaeological sensibility that sifts through activity and décor, structure and history, services and emotion, the personal and the mechanical, ascribing commensurate value to each. Narrative and space become enmeshed as the boundaries between background and action dissolve and time collapses. Rooms suffer another loss, that of hierarchy, to be filled almost indiscriminately with the presence of intangible histories, memories or, equally, with endless details about stuff, often in the form of lists: lists about the contents of the rooms, shopping lists, lists of items from catalogues, extracted from adverts, lists that incorporate lists from elsewhere in the novel. Like Daniel Spoerri's exposure of the fecundity of connections inherent in the everyday clutter of ordinary used objects in *The Anecdoted Topography of Chance* (1962), Perec proceeds with the forensic method of a detective.

It is apt Perec's apartment block is located in Paris as it is here that the building type emerged in its modern form. The revolutions in spatial relations that defined Paris's pre-eminent position as the modern city were realised through a hidden landscape of financial speculation, the acceleration of forms of commodification into all aspects of social life, and the liberalisation of credit. Not only did the apartment become the most typical unit of domesticity within the city, it was also the site of the most intense financial speculations as members of a broad ranges of social classes – especially in the Second Empire from 1848 to 1871, the period of Hausmannisation – sought to profit from the transformation of the city.

As Perec and others have proposed, the apartment block is neither entirely public nor private but belongs to both. A container for the most intimate of activities, it is simultaneously the repeating motif of the new city, the delineator and decoration of the new boulevard, a key aspect in a culture of heightened visuality. According to Sharon Marcus (1999), the public spectacle of the 19th-century Parisian boulevard became absorbed by the porous facades of the apartment block through a quality of transparency that was both real and idealised.[8] As Diana Periton has pointed out, architectural drawings and pattern books of the city at this time often stressed design qualities through the medium of the cross-section. These emphasised the connections between domestic space and the street as well as the simultaneity of lives lived in apartment buildings. This was often seen as a revelatory device, a means of scrutinising and tracing the 'inner secrets' of otherwise hidden domestic spaces, 'with our finger and our

7 Perec, G. *Life a User's Manual* (trans. Georges Bellos, London: Vintage 1978/2003).

8 Marcus, S. *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

eyes'. The delineation of such drawings as a 'coupe anatomique' begins to conflate the building with the bodies it contains.[9] This found an echo in literary accounts. Jules Janin's updated version of an eighteenth-century fictional character named Asmodeus originally removed roofs to peer into houses before beginning in the 1840s – in a prototypical Perecquian method – to remove entire facades. The section of the apartment block and the activities found there become a synecdoche for Paris itself.

Walter Benjamin's unfinished *Arcades Project* echoes *Life: A User's Manual* in its attempts to decode an urban system. The collecting and collating of fragments of found cultural, commercial and technological phenomena is paralleled by meditations on the meanings of their interconnectedness. Arranged in a series of thematic sections called 'convolutes', the fifteenth of the series ('Convolute O') is occupied by two particular activities which played an important role in the development of the spatial culture of 19th-century Paris: prostitution and gambling. Already conflating the commercial or financial aspects of these speculative practices, Benjamin's convolute also begins to make connections across scales and with other economic activities – echoing the observations of Duff and Joyce – from the female body to architecture, specifically, the rented building.

> 'You see ... in Paris there are two types of women, just as there are two kinds of houses ...: the bourgeois house, where one lives only after signing a lease, and the rooming house, where one lives by the month ... How are they to be distinguished? ... by the sign ... Now the outfit is the sign of the female ... and there are outfits of such eloquence that it is absolutely as if you could read on the second floor if the advertisement, "Furnished apartment to Let"!'.[10]

The material qualities of these spaces is also explored, as the layered transparencies of the apartment façade are transposed – in descriptions of masks, make-up, cross-dressing and fashion – once again on to the body of the prostitute.

> 'As I was wandering in the vicinity of the Pont Neuf, a heavily made-up prostitute accosted me. She had on a light muslin dress that was tucked up to the knee and that clearly displayed the red silk drawers covering thigh and belly' [11]

For Marcus, the associations between the female body and built form formed a reciprocal relationship which operated over a series of urban scales. Entire neighbourhoods were delineated according to the type

9 Periton, D. 'The 'Coupe Anatomique': sections through the nineteenth-century Parisian apartment block', in *The Journal of Architecture*, 9:3, 2007: 289-304.

10 Benjamin, W. *The Arcades Project* (trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1999).

11 Ibid

of women working or living there, while women themselves acquired identities associated with particular urban areas. Lorettes – a specific class of demi-mondaine – for example, were named after the church of Notre Dame de Lorette in the northern half of the city. But it was the generic and universal form of the apartment block which distilled and concentrated these associations. The buildings themselves became feminised, '"girls of stone" [whose] faults could be covered up just as a "an old coquette" would conceal her wrinkles [and where] 'for rent' signs ... would "glitter like a courtesan's ardent eyes"'.[12] The apartment was both vehicle and symbol of an accelerating culture of commodification where the pursuit of profit involved the increasing commercialisation of social life and temporary appropriations of both domestic and bodily spaces: Paris, as Emile Zola's novel *Nana* (1880) implies, was a city of speculation, exchange and other intimate desires.[13]

Whatever the original triggers of Ireland's so-called economic miracle were, it quickly became about the buying and selling of property. Some of its origins can be seen in Charles Haughey's decision in the 1980s to adopt Margaret Thatcher's housing policy and convert much of the publically-owned housing stock into exchangeable commodities. This was ultimately linked to a process of urban renewal and regeneration where, in place of blight, it was suggested that thriving inner city populations could be realised through the provision of high-density apartment and, latterly, mixed-use buildings. These were encouraged by generous tax-incentives, supported by vigorous marketing campaigns propounding the benefits of inner-city living and further legitimised by a reappraisal of the importance of 'context' and 'place' within planning and architectural discourses. The phenomenon which saw the empty spaces of the island's town and cities – gap-sites, brown and green field sites, the gardens of large houses, river banks, the conventual lands of religious orders, docklands and other ex-infrastructural landscapes – transformed into speculative housing schemes, lasted until the property bubble burst in 2008.

Constructed under conditions of intense financial speculation and high land prices, apartment blocks were often built as densely and cheaply as possible. Accordingly, formulaic design strategies were refined to realise maximum financial return from any site. 16.2 metre wide blocks with concrete cross-walls, for example, placed 22 metres apart with 3.8 metres for fire access. Apartments were often arranged in fours around circulation cores, with windowless pod bathrooms and kitchens located in the middle of the plan, and so on.[14] The predominance, especially during the 1990s, of apartment construction in 'designated areas' of urban blight often meant the creation of tenuously-linked archipelagos where isolated examples of this building type were surrounded by other land-uses and forms of housing. Writing about Dublin in this period, Jacinta Prunty discussed the inevitability of gentrification as higher-earning incomers lived in close proximity to deprived areas and impoverished communities.[15] She joined

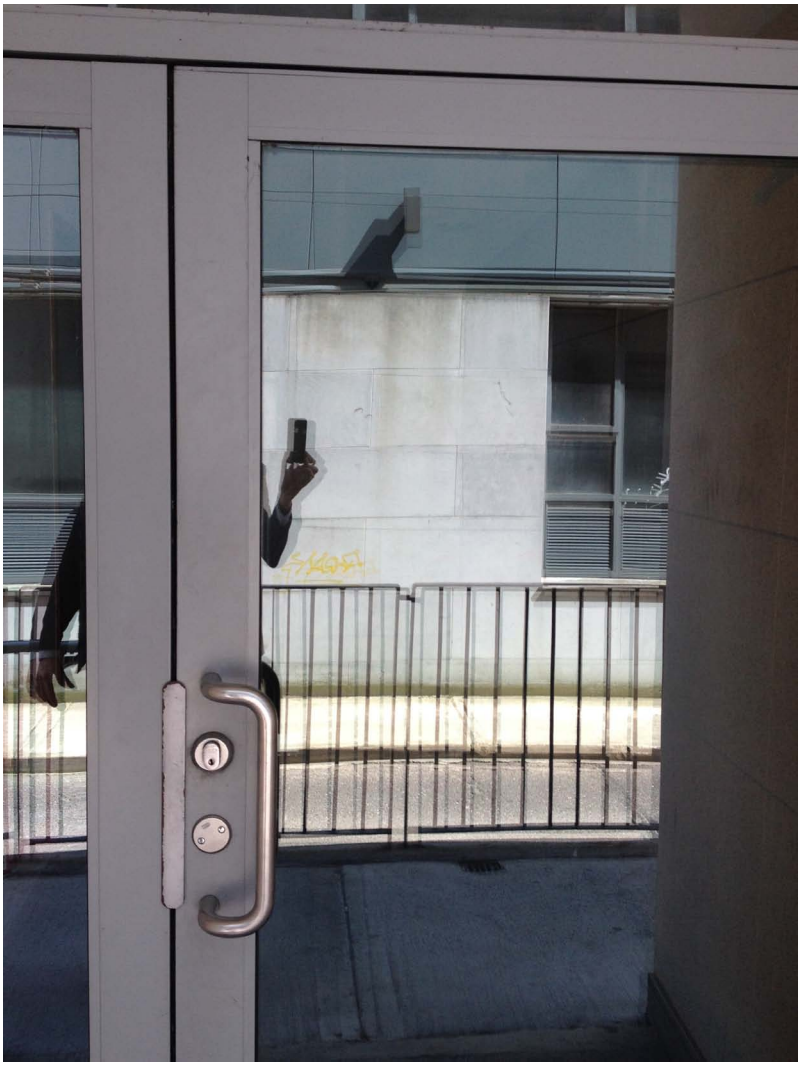
[12] Marcus, S. op.cit.

[13] Zola, E. *Nana* (trans. Douglas Parmée. Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1880/2009).

[14] Pike, M. (under the pseudonym of Liam O'Flynn) 'Recipe No. 23 Maximum profit apartment scheme' in Boyd, G. A. (ed.) *building material 14: building boom and bust* (Dublin: Architectural Association of Ireland. 2005: 26-28).

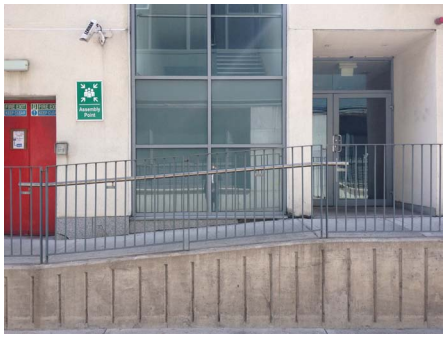
[15] Prunty, J. op.cit.

others such as Neil Smith in arguing that this juxtaposition of wealth and building type resulted in an architecture of enclaves, of securitisation and observation, of gates and cameras, physical and electronic thresholds and sequences of controlled areas.



The etymology of the word apartment in the Italian appartare, meaning to separate, seems particularly apt in descriptions of many of these speculative apartment blocks, including the one opposite my office window. Non-rentable areas such as staircases and corridors were restrained to an absolute minimum while boundaries between contiguous spaces and zones were reduced to a series of intimately, yet decisively separating, thin lines: the depth of a floor, a concrete party wall, a window, the façade, or the convex peep-hole in a door. Other deprivations such as single-aspect flats with little or no outside space led such typolologies to be seen as ersatz forms of sub-standard domesticity, offering no more than temporary accommodation and only then for narrow sections of society with little other choices. In *Life A User's Manual*, the author traces the

apartment block's social and spatial narratives over extended periods of time. In the late twentieth-century Irish version, the predominance of short-term leases meant that these long-spanning durations were largely absent. Perec's networks of relationships realised through the habitual and prolonged use of space were replaced by the transactions of temporary populations. Conditions of anonymity emerged.



Irene Cieraad has written on the shifting position and meaning of the window in Dutch society. Depicted frequently over the centuries in visual culture, she argues that the Dutch domestic window, as a filter between public and private space, was a specifically female site, one which both facilitated and expressed women's acts of labour and their control over the household, as well as symbolizing aspects of character: virtue or, during the twentieth century, often vice.[16] The latter refers to the practice of soliciting through the display of the female body within the window of brothels which were often sited in formerly domestic dwellings. Occupying the threshold, partaking in both the private and the public in a space which is both commercial and domestic, can be seen an act of transgression which immediately confers a specific social identity: the prostitute or, to use 19th-century nomenclature, the public woman. Such vitrine appearances were linked to the government regulation of prostitution in 20th-century Dutch society and a legislative desire to render it identifiable and visible within the urban condition. In *Warped Space*, Anthony Vidler describes another example of this in his discussion of 'Le signe', a short story by Guy de Montpassant published in 1886. It involves the pervasive phenomena of faire la fenêtre, an act of sexual solicitation effected in 19th-century Paris, where a woman communicated her availability to men on the street through a series of codified gestures and signs conducted from an upstairs window. Vidler describes how Sigmund Freud invoked the essay to conflate the loss of virtue with the element of the window as an explanation for the phenomenon of female agoraphobia.[17]

Yet the woman who often occupied the window of the apartment opposite my office was rarely if ever in direct visual contact with the street. The mechanics of prostitution in 20th-century Ireland have, like elsewhere, shifted over time according to culture, legislation and

16 Cieraad, I. 'Dutch Windows: Female Virtue and Female Vice' in Cieraad, I. (ed.) *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*. (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999).

17 Vidler, A. *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).

ultimately technology. Never acquiring the de-criminalised legitimacy of the Netherlands and its tendency towards stabilitas loci, in Ireland the practice of soliciting tended to involve the temporary, most often nocturnal, appropriation of public spaces – the occupation of expedient landscapes whose forms conformed or could be adapted to certain functional criteria. The tactile and verbal street solicitations of the 19th and early 20th-centuries on street-corners and other central urban sites – experienced by Duff and Joyce – were superseded by the mainly optical practice of kerb-crawling effected by the use of the motorcar. The latter appropriated more open, liminal zones often at the edges of inner cities along pieces of infrastructure like canals whose length facilitated and the gaze of headlights. By the late twentieth century, just as the economic boom in Ireland was developing a upsurge in the practice of prostitution, another series of conditions emerged which would re-make its landscape. Anti-prostitution legislation in 1993 contributed to the removal of much of the practice from the street just as the development of the internet and the mobile phone ensured that a public presence was no longer necessary. The anonymity and securitisation of space found in the apartment block offered the final condition.

The woman who sat at the window of the apartment opposite my office was not soliciting. Instead, this practice was carried out through both an electronic and a physical landscape: the use of web-sites and other social media and then the apartment block and its relationship to public space. For her, to a certain extent, and unlike the asymmetry of street-walking, some control could be exercised over this landscape. There were opportunities to filter and choose clients remotely and survey them they passed through the layers of buzzers, doorbells, peepholes and curtains that interrupted the route from street to apartment. For other sex-workers in apartments this would not necessarily be the case.[18]

[18] Whether this could potentially represent a safer environment for the sex-worker is debatable and dependent on many factors. The media coverage surrounding Operation Quest stressed the abuses, exploitations and instances of human trafficking uncovered in the hidden spaces of brothels within apartments and houses in Ireland. Conversely, some prostitutes' advocacy groups have suggested that some of the raided 'brothels' were merely the dwellings of co-habiting sex-workers.

Running parallel to the school of architecture, the long façade of the apartment building allowed glimpses of everyday and unguarded domesticity. For most of the time, during the day, its large windows framed empty scenes. Any disruptions in this pattern were, therefore, conspicuous. The figure by the window smoking cigarettes, taking phone-calls and watching television, interrupted only by periodic closures of the curtains – this series of ephemeral minutiae occupying time, equipment and space began to reveal a specific meaning in use within an otherwise generic block. None of this was visible from the street.

Much of the geography of prostitution in Ireland is no longer legible in the way that described by Duff or Joyce in the early 20th century, or by Benjamin in Paris. Nor it is in the liminal landscapes associated with more recent kerb-crawling. These represented centralised iterations of a public practice that had specific spatial characteristics that Perec would recognise. Spaces in the city that had become known through and by their habitual, prolonged and in some cases historical use as sites of soliciting. At its most intense in Dublin and Paris, these associations ingrained themselves into built fabric as neighbourhoods, buildings and architectural elements such as the door or more particularly, the window became emblematic of the selling of sex. As it is no longer necessary for the body of the sex-worker to physically occupy the street to solicit, these market places are disappearing, replaced by a practice mediated electronically and housed privately. Leaving few public traces, the new geography of prostitution in Ireland is fragmented and dispersed vertically throughout the city. If a map of this were to be drawn, it would no longer coincide with areas of social deprivation or follow lines of infrastructure. Instead, it would correspondence with the flow of capital that spanned the millennium and reshaped extensive parts of Irish cities and especially Dublin. This abstract landscape of financial speculation became concrete in the apartment block where an accelerated commodification of space overlaps with the commodification of bodies. Within these parameters, however, prostitution can exist almost anywhere. The practice has detached itself from spatial and material signifiers and its presence is only very imprecisely codified within the architecture of the apartment block, or revealed fleetingly to other, equally private realms nestled in the section of the city.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

A Monument and a Blindspot – On the Precarious State of Modernist Architecture in Bratislava

Marián Potočár

The architectural and urban structures of Bratislava, capital of Slovakia, which were constructed under the discourse of monumental post-war modernism, are turning into urban blind-spots as their spatial structure is fragmented and their former spatial program is mostly no longer understood by contemporary society. To better comprehend this phenomenon, it is in our view necessary to look at the history of these spaces in a long perspective. In this case study, we look into the history of modern architecture and urban planning practices which shaped the Námestie slobody Square in Bratislava, and which were significantly influenced by the cultural programs of authoritarian political regimes of the 20th century. Even though only some of them were executed, they subsequently added to the production of the Square in the sense of its physical environment as well as an imaginary place, and so they play instrumental roles in contemporary perceptions and usages of the Square's landscape. Regarding this investigation, it is useful to look at the practices of architectural and urban planning as intellectual activities producing representations of space, understood in the sense of the theory of the production of space developed by Henri Lefebvre who interprets the space as 'spatial triad'. From this perspective, the spaces of architectural plans are not scrutinized as the results of isolated processes of intellectual work, but rather they are theorized as a crucial players in negotiating the relations between various facets of space – perceived, conceived and lived space – which together constitute urban environments as a complex socio-spatial phenomena.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

The Object and Method of Inquiry

The urban landscape of Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, is characterised by its architectural and urban structures constructed under the discourse of post-war monumental modernism.[1] These structures are now turning into blind-spots because of various factors, such as the fact that the construction of their spatial structure remained uncompleted. Moreover, because their originally envisaged program is generally no longer understood by contemporary society, they are being further fragmented by contemporary development. One of Bratislava's most symptomatic public spaces in this regard can be found not far from its old town centre. A four hectare rectangular space, demarcated by the post-war modernist edifices of the Slovak University of Technology and the Ministry of Transport, and by the Governmental office, which is housed in the historical structure of the former Archbishop's baroque palace, extended by several modern annexes, is called 'Námestie slobody' — the 'Freedom Square'. The 'Square' could easily be mistaken for an urban park, as its landscape features extensive areas of greenery and the whole place is crowned by a steel colossus of a flower-shaped fountain. The place seems to have been forgotten and left unmaintained by the city authorities, and the fact that the fountain has not seen water for years adds to its peculiar atmosphere of melancholy and decay.

The Square is typologically related with other central spaces of political representation, which were constructed in other South Eastern European cities during the same time-period and in analogous processes of nation building. These processes coincided with the period of various authoritarian political regimes and were significantly influenced by logic of their cultural programs. The case-study set out here attempts an inquiry and interpretation of the history of modern architecture and urban planning practices which shaped the Námestie slobody during the 20th century.[2] Even though only some of the elaborated designs were actually executed, realised, as well as imagined architectural spaces linked to various ideologies added to the production of the Square as a complex socio-spatial phenomena, and can be understood to play instrumental roles in its contemporary perception and usages. Regarding the investigation that follows, it thus seems useful to look at the practices of architectural and urban planning as intellectual activities producing representations of space, understood in the sense of the theory of the production of space developed by Henri Lefebvre, who interprets the space as 'spatial triad'.[3] According to Lefebvre, space is produced by three types of practice: by physical transformations of the environment (producing 'physical space'), practices of representation of space (producing 'conceived space') and practices of appropriation of space, living in space (producing 'representational space', or 'space of representation'). From this perspective, the spaces of architectural plans are not scrutinized as a result of an isolated process of intellectual work. While they are primarily

1 Compare Henrieta Moravčíková, 'Monumentality in Slovak Architecture of the 1960s and 1970s: Authoritarian, National, Great and Abstract', *The Journal of Architecture*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2009). Available at http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13602360802705205 [acessed at 04.01.15].

2 For more detailed history of architecture of Námestie slobody and its analytical comparison with other analogical cases in regional context see also Marián Potočár, 'The Square: "Námestie slobody" in 'Bratislava: Continuity and Change in Architectonic Strategies' in: H. Moravčíková, P. Szalay, M. Dulla, M. Topolčanská, M. Potočár. & K. Haberlandová (Eds.), *Modern and/or Totalitarian in the Architecture of the 20th Century in Slovakia.* (Bratislava: Slovart, 2013), pp. 156 – 167 and Marián Potočár, 'Námestie slobody v Bratislave', Diss. Thesis (Bratislava: Fakulta architektúry STU, 2014).

2 Lefebvre's theory has proved to be a useful tool in case of research concerning the phenomenology of specific urban spaces constructed in the context of real socialist regimes. See for example the case study of Nowa Huta in Poland by Łukasz Stanek, 'Die Produktion Des Städtischen Raums Durch Massenmediale Erzählpraktiken: Der Fall Nowa Huta', *Sozialistische Städte Zwischen Herrschaft Und Selbstbehauptung. Kommunalpolitik, Stadtplanung Und Alltag in Der DDR* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2009) and the Thesis by Matej Blažek dealing with housing estate Petržalka built in Bratislava under real-socialist regime, 'Thirdspace and Sub-culture: Spatialities and Identities of Hip-hop Youth in Post-socialist Housing Estate.' (School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2007).

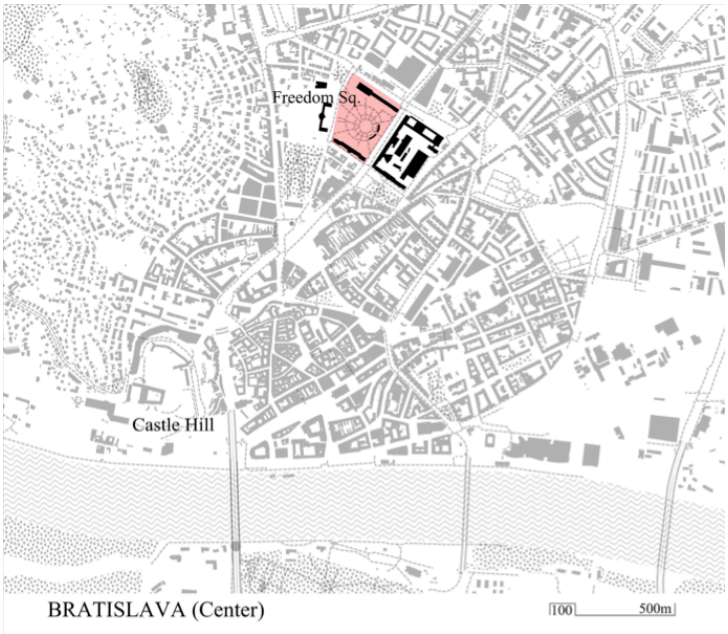


Fig. 1: Location of the Freedom Square on the map of Bratislava centre. Source of map data: openstreetmap.org.

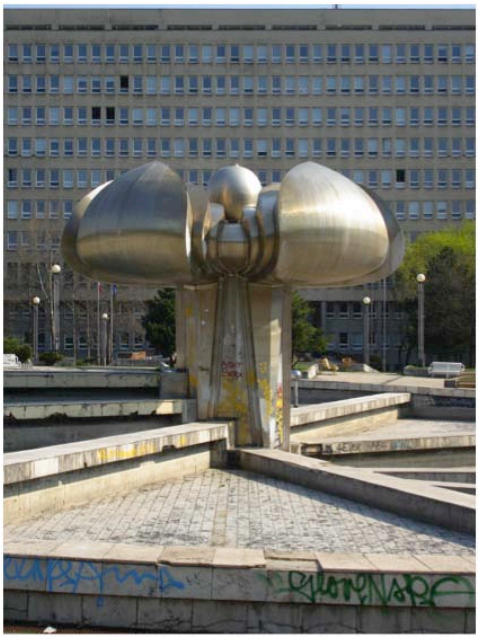


Fig. 2: Fountain 'Družba' on Námestie slobody today. Photo by author, 2012.

seen as an attempt to assert certain strategies of governing an urban environment, they are also becoming a crucial player in negotiating the relations between various forms of space – perceived, conceived and lived space.[4]

1918 – 1945: The Emergance of a Monumental Urban Space in Bratislava

The production of what today is Námestie slobody was a sub-process within the overall dynamic development of Bratislava during the last century. After the World War I and the fall of Austro-Hungarian Empire, the city became a rapidly growing urban centre of the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia. Its metamorphosis from the town of 'Pressburg' into the city of 'Bratislava'[5] was driven by ideological motives that sought the building of a 'modern', 'industrial' and 'Slavic' city. The site of former archbishop's garden, which was renamed Námestie slobody [the Freedom Square] at this time, soon started to attract the attention of the new Czechoslovak authorities which anticipated this to be a potential site for constituting a space of political representation. Back then, in its vicinity there was a picturesque mixture of low suburban dwellings, wine taverns and the gardens of former baroque palaces. The Square itself was a spacious and dusty area in the neighbourhood of military barracks and an old municipal gas-station; an empty and amorphous, yet distinct urban place, a representational space of urban heterogeneity. Apart from an open-air marketplace and military exercises, it also hosted festivals and

4 Regarding architectural plans and interventions in the terms of strategic / tactical moves owes to the specific context of authoritarian regime seeking the construction of dominated spaces, thus reinforcing own hegemony. As Lefebvre points out '... ideologies relate to space in a most significant way, because they intervene in space in the form of strategies.' Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 105.

5 Original city's name used to be 'Pressburg' (in German), respectively 'Pozsony' (in Hungarian) or 'Prešporok' (in Slovak). City was given the new name 'Bratislava' after World War I. and establishing of Czechoslovak republic.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

circus attractions, giving it some degree of exotic flair to which it also owed its colloquial nickname 'Sahara'. Notably, the Square was also reported as a poorly controllable area and the scene of various 'inappropriate' behaviours and obscenities.

In 1929 an open architectural competition was held, aimed at designing a building for the Zemský úrad [Land Authority][6] on the Square, which should have become a new political centre of the city. It resulted in several designs, which were applications of functionalist planning methods (the administrative complex itself was seen as a 'factory for production of documents'), preferred by progressive Czech and Slovak architects at that time.[7] None of the proposals was effectively implemented however, mainly due to the slowdown of city development during the economic crisis in the 1930s.

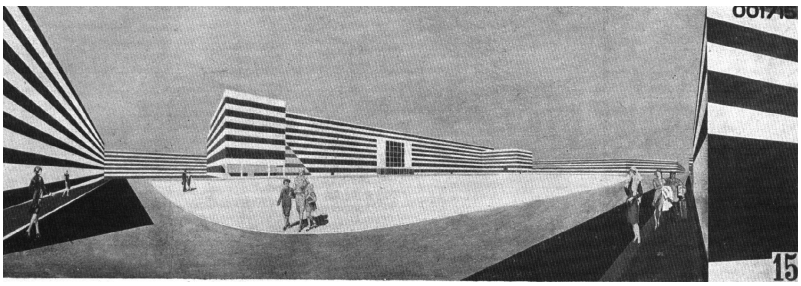


Fig. 3: The edifice of the 'Land Authority' on Námestie slobody, as designed by team of architects Bucháček – Míšek – Strnad in 1929. Source: Architekt SIA, Vol. 29 (1930), pp. 53 – 66.

Development gained new dynamics only after the rise of the Slovak nationalist movement crowned by establishment of the 'Slovak State' at the end of 1930s.[8] By organising frequent rallies and mass rituals, the ideology of the emerging totalitarian regime immediately projected itself into various public spaces, among which Námestie slobody had a prominent role. From perspective of the state, the Square was transformed into a space of lived 'national unity' for obvious technical reasons (being a large area suitable for mass public events). But its heterogeneity and its immanent subversive potential made it all the more necessary to turn it into a dominated space. According to Lefebvre:

> spatial code is not simply a means of reading or interpreting space: rather it is a means of living in that space, of understanding it, and of producing it. As such it brings together verbal signs ... and non-verbal signs (music, sounds, evocations, architectural constructions).[9]

6 The quasi-federal political system of the inter-war Czechoslovakia recognized four major "Lands" - Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, and Ruthenian Russia. Bratislava was the regional capital city of Slovakia.

7 From more than 30 participating teams, 4 were rewarded the highest prize ex aequo; among them also notable inter-war architects Josef Gočár or Emil Belluš.

8 The split of Slovak Republic from Czechoslovakia was arranged by Hitler and Jozef Tiso – leader of clerical-fascist 'Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana' [Hlinka's Slovak People's Party] (HSĽS) – in march 1938 and lasted under the patronage of Germany until the end of the World War II. The ruling party was named after the founder of the movement – pater Andrej Hlinka

9 Lefebvre, op.cit, p. 47.

And so Námestie slobody became the stage for military parades, ceremonial assemblies, stylized folklorist festivals and even church masses – a heterotopic collage of events organized by the ruling regime.[10]

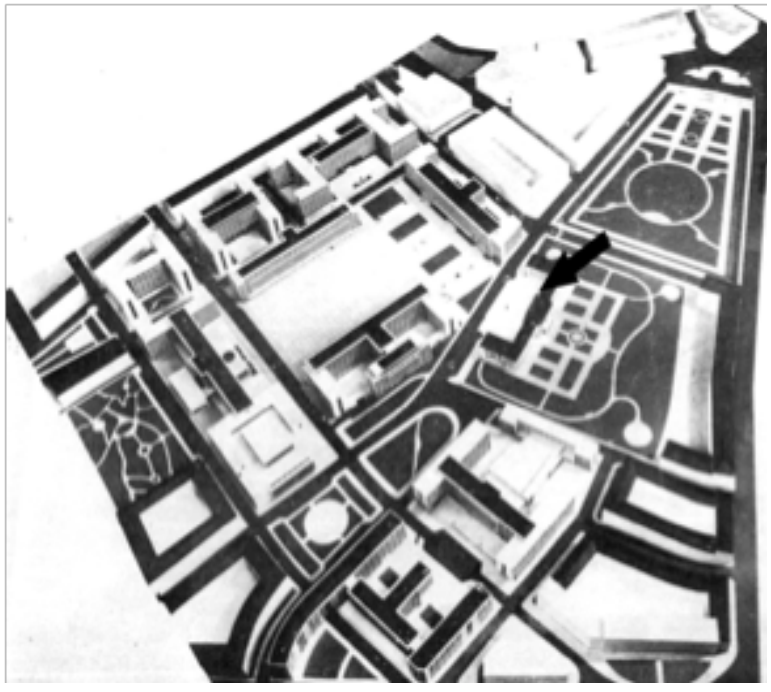
[10] Compare Dušan Kováč, *Bratislava 1939-1945* (Albert Marenčin Vydavateľstvo PT, 2006).

Fig. 4: Catholic mass on the Námestie slobody in 1941. Courtesy of the Slovak national archive / Archive of Slovak press agency (STK)

Fig. 5: Military parade on the Námestie slobody in 1941. Courtesy of the Slovak national archive / Archive of Slovak press agency (STK)

Fig. 6: Official ceremonial assembly on the Námestie slobody in 1940s. Courtesy of the Slovak national archive / Archive of Slovak press agency (STK)

Fig. 7: Photo of a model of the design proposal for the competition for 'Governmental District' in 1942 (arrow marking the Archbishop's Palace). Author: Josef Gočár. Proposal was awarded the 1st prize. Courtesy of Archive Institute of Construction and Architecture of Slovak Academy of Sciences.



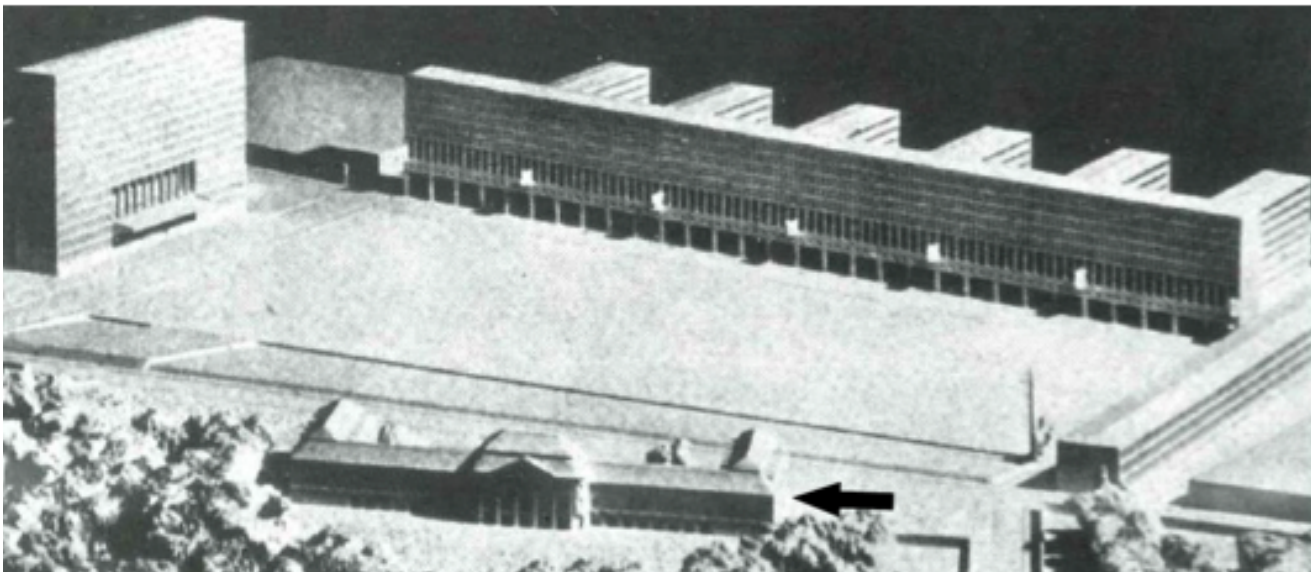


Fig. 8: Photo of a model of the design proposal for the competition for 'Government District' in 1942 (arrow marking the Archbishop's Palace). Authors: Adalberto Libera, Ernesto La Padula. Proposal was awarded the 2nd prize. Courtesy of the Archive of the Institute of Construction and Architecture of Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Consequently, to crown their hegemony, the state elites intended to alter the landscape of Bratislava physically. The exclusive international master-planning Competition for Governmental District on Námestie slobody which took place in 1942 was among the most spectacular projects in this matter.[11] The program included new presentable edifices and monuments, including the freshly refurbished archbishop's palace,[12] and an assembly area for rallies. The concept of the district was clearly inspired by typological model of Nazi 'Gauforum',[13] but in the development, opportunities were given for examination of different architectural methods stemming from various tendencies and currents. First of these was the legacy of the former Czechoslovakian inter-war avantgarde represented by the winning proposal of Josef Gočár, who resolved the program by proposing a simple modernist architecture. Bulky volumes of administrative complex were efficiently housed into the existing site, and thus avoided excessive demolition in the area. The second prize was awarded to the Viennese architectural office of Siegfried Theiss, Hans Jaksch and Werner Theiss, whose proposal was an exercise in the neoclassical style of National Socialism. The second runner-up team of Italians Adalberto Libera and Ernesto La Padula delivered a fine example of Italian rationalist architecture. Their proposal for a vast square was to be flanked by monumental cubic volumes; the abstract and repetitive textures of their façades stressed the emptiness of the open space and sought to create an effect of total 'spectacularization'.[14] This self-confident proposal won particular acknowledgement from the local cultural scene, which commonly looked up to Italian models – not least because of the

[11] Other prestigious competition was that one for master-planning of new University Campus on the Castle Hill and the Danube promenade of Bratislava in 1941. For more details about these competitions facilitated by Ministry of Construction see also Matúš Dulla and Henrieta Moravčíková, Architektúra Slovenska v 20. Storočí, (Bratislava: Slovart, 2002), pp. 172 – 174 and Elena Stoličná, 'Architektúra Nemeckej Proveniencie Na Slovensku v Rokoch 1939 – 1945', Diss. Thesis (Bratislava: Ústav stavebníctva a architektúry SAV, 2000). See also Jean-Louis Cohen, Architecture in Uniform; Designing and Building for the Second World War (Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2011), pp. 364 – 367.

[12] From 1919 until 1940 the Palace housed a military hospital, after that it was reconstructed for purposes of the new Ministry of Forreign Affairs. Project was designed by Slovak architect Emil Belluš.

[13] I.e. a political district, typically planned for regional capitals of the Third Reich. See Christiane Wolf, Gauforen. Zentren der Macht: Zur nationalsozialistischen Architektur und Stadtplanung (Verlag Bauwesen /Huss Med, 1999).

[14] Compare also Lefebvre, op.cit., p. 125.

Fig. 9: Building of the Central Postal Administration on Námestie slobody. Shortly after its completion at the beginning of 1950s, the edifice stood out decisively in the middle of low-rise structures of that time. Authors of the design are Eugen Kramár and Štefan Lukačovič. Courtesy of the Archive of the Slovak University of Technology

ideological proximities between the Slovakian ruling regime and Italian Fascism. Despite appreciation for these awarded proposals, the eventual construction of the Governmental district turned out to lie beyond the capabilities of the small war-time Republic.

1945 – 1951: The new University Campus

After World War II and the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic, the discourse on urban development and architecture was developing in the context of the gradual nationalization of the economy and the political transition towards a soviet-like socialism.[15] Despite the sharp ideological shift, the development of architects' discourse concerning the Square was showing notable continuity. Even though the idea of the Government District on Námestie slobody was abandoned for the time being, architects in charge of the post-war projects spontaneously began

[15] The Czechoslovak communist party linked to the Soviet union was the most influential party in the after-war governmental coalition of 'National front' and grasped full power in 1948. The further usage of the term 'socialist' is here meant as a reference to the political status quo of one-party dictatorship until 1989.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Fig. 10: Façade details of the building of 'Pavilion of Theoretical Institutes'. The role of technology and technical experts in a socialist society is depicted trough comic-like narratives embossed in stone. Photo and collage by author, 2012.

Fig. 11: Volunteers' brigades are working on the Námestie slobody. According to the newsreel from 1950s, students, workers and clerks have voluntarily contributed 150 000 men-hours of work to the building of the Square where 'the citizens of Bratislava will be celebrating their joyful Maydays and rally for the peace'. Weekly newsreel No. 4 (1952), Courtesy of the Archive of the Slovak Film Institute.

to recycle and adapt formal concepts elaborated in the course of wartime competitions. The first modern construction on the Square actually took place in 1946, when the building of Ústredná poštová správa [Central Postal Administration] replaced the old military barracks on the north-east side of the Square.[16] Its architectural form was knowingly derived from the Libera and La Padula's proposal for Government District, in which the design had the form of a distinctive slab volume of the House of the ruling party HSĽS.

As the cornerstone for the first University building – 'Pavillion of Theoretical Institutes' designed by Belluš himself – was laid in 1948, the ritual was held in a ceremonial fashion. After the communist party grasped full power on the same year, the Square, which was renamed 'Gottwaldovo námestie' ['Gottwald's Square'][17] and the construction in progress was subsequently frequently presented in official news reels. It was turned into a performance which sought to establish an organic relationship between a particular urban space, city as a whole and the social order. Brigades of students, workers and public servants were shown, as they voluntarily worked on the site, thus supporting the project of a new Campus. The developing architectural and representational space became a metonym for empowering of the 'worker's state' through knowledge. The regime also continued the established tradition of public rituals staged on the Square –Gottwald's Square hosted parades of 'People's militia' and Mayday ceremonies. Due to such combined spatial practices, Gottwald's Square was quickly turned into a representation of the socialist regime.

1951 – 1989: Continuities and Ruptures in Architectural Strategies

The beginning of 1950s was a peculiar episode in the Square's history. At this time, as happened in other countries of Eastern Europe, architects in Czechoslovakia were directly pushed towards applying historicist eclecticism, also known as a 'method of socialist realism'. This Stalinist doctrine was an alleged synthesis of 'progressive' elements which appeared across history, and it was usually expressed under the simplified slogan 'national in form, socialist in content'. It did not actually bring about any robust theoretical discourse on architecture. Its role was more an instrumental one – a means for enforcing discipline upon the professional scene through an imposed drill in the production of particular architectural forms.

Curiously, a cosmopolitan modernist skyscraper for the Central Planing Institute was proposed for the northern side of the Square as late as 1951 by the team of the state planning office Stavoprojekt under the leadership of well-known avant-gardist Josef Havlíček. But the Stalinist cultural program prevailed soon afterwards, and a competition for new

16 It was designed by Slovak architects Štefan Lukáč and Eugen Kramár, both of who also took place on the competition in 1942. The Building is today the office of Slovak Ministry of Transport and Regional Development.

17 Klement Gottwald was the leader of communist party and since 1948 the first president of socialist Czechoslovakia; he died in 1953. Cult of his personality partially survived the wave of de-stalinization and saw revival in the period of 'normalization' in 1970s, which followed the occupation of Czechoslovakia by armies of Warsaw Pact in 1968.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

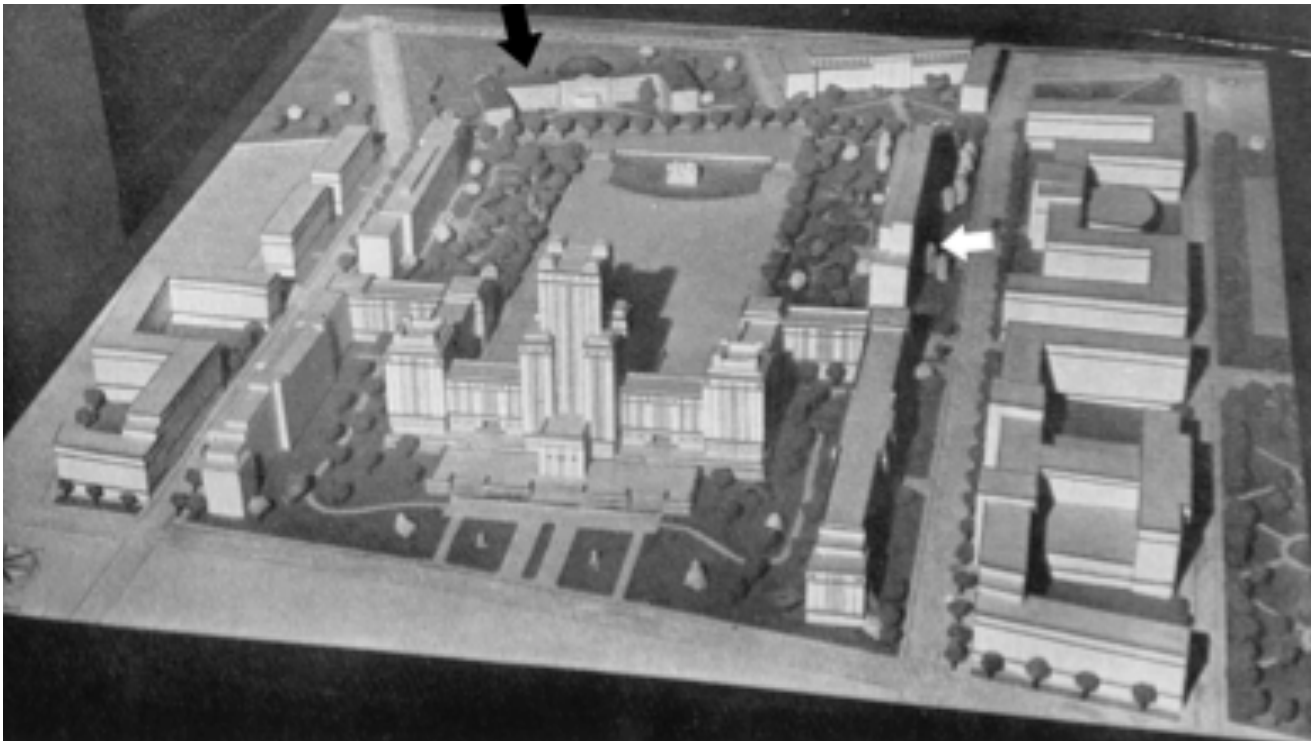


Fig. 12: Photo of a model of the design proposal for the competition for ‘Solution for Gottwald’s Square’ in 1953 (black arrow marking the pre-existent Archbishop's Palace, white arrow marking the pre-existent Central Post Office). Authors: J. Bóna, M. Hladký, V. Uhliarik. Their proposal won first prize. Source: Architektura ČSR, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1954). pp. 82 – 90.

Fig. 13: Photo of a model of the design proposal for the competition for ‘Solution for Gottwald’s Square’ in 1953 (black arrow marking the pre-existent Archbishop's Palace, white arrow marking the pre-existent Central Post Office). Authors: K. Kňava, Lugs. Source: Architektura ČSR, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1954). pp. 82 – 90.

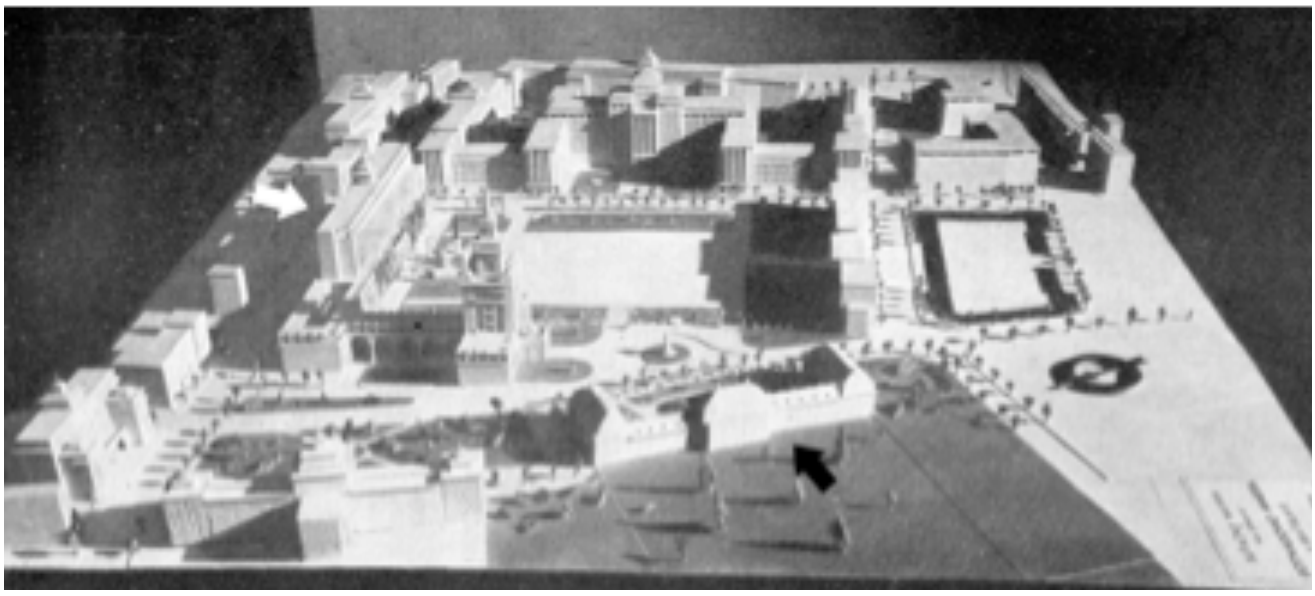


Fig. 14: Aerial view of the Square in early 1960s. Source: Karol Belický, Nová tvár Slovenska, (Bratislava: 1962).

Fig. 15: Ceremonial display of the Memorial of K. Gottwald on the Námestie slobody in 1981. Courtesy of the Archive of the News Agency of the Slovak Republic (TASR).

master-plan for the Square was organized in 1953, just as modernist architecture turned from being a guiding star into a criminal overnight. Competing architects and artists were now expected to apply prescribed formal strategies of historicist monumental urbanism and architecture. In a bizarre turn of events, special emphasis was placed on the task of neglecting the figure of the recently-finished and much-celebrated building of the Postal Administration.[18]

However, the overall political atmosphere turned again quickly after the death of Stalin and Gottwald (both 1953) whereupon Khrushchev announced a completely new official policy. The design proposals from the ill-fated competition of 1953 were criticized immediately following their publication in professional journals, and were embarrassingly scrapped as quickly as possible. The architectural epoch of 'socialist realism' left behind nothing but confused memories, and the staged festival of building the socialist Square in the socialist city was over, just as the sense of disappointment began to spread.

[18] One of architects of the buildings, Eugen Kramár was actually imprisoned in 1951 – 1961.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

In the period between the 1930s and 1960s, the original avantgarde movement continuously matured towards a functionalist planning doctrine which defined urban areas and particular urban spaces as mostly mono-functional elements in relation to the organism of the city as a whole. Despite the fact that no more monuments for the leaders were designed, urban development continued to provide a metaphor for the reinforcing of political hegemony. Several more streets around the Square were demolished at the end of 1950s to make a place for more faculties of the SVŠT.[19] The once heterogeneous 'northern suburb' was effectively replaced by a homogeneous fabric of official edifices. Apart from occasional official events and a routine functioning of the university and the administrative buildings, the Square was effectively degraded into a mere transition area. Despite the ongoing discussions among urban-planers and architects, and despite a few additional smaller master-planing competitions aimed at the 'revitalisation of the Square' which took place at the end of 1950s and 1960s, hesitancy prevailed. The Square as a public space remained in a provisional state and was used as a parking lot. The final alteration of its physical space was executed in only 1979 – 1981, during the later stage of 'normalisation'.[20] The memorial of K. Gottwald was finally installed in the form of an ensemble of colossal statues where the leading figure portrayed Gottwald himself. It used to be located on the highest, northern edge of the Square. The remaining landscape was turned into presentable urban park, its expressive design was based on a concentric, radially-organised grass areas and concrete blocks. A monumental steel fountain called 'Družba' [Unity] was erected on the focal point of the park, flanked with broad water-cascades.[21]

The landscape dominated by the memorial fixed the status quo of power relations in spatial form, which for its users limited the possibilities of interactions to the opposing poles of conformity or subversion. Once the Square was turned into the representation of an ideal urban space of the real socialist regime in the late period of dictatorship – the Námestie slobody used to be frequently depicted in tourist brochures and other materials published by the municipality – even a casual visit to the green areas was a contribution to the positive image of socialist Bratislava. The 'public space' of the city thus became a representational space of antagonistic social relations.

From a Monument to a Blind Spot – Námestie slobody after 1989

Although Námestie slobody was constructed to become the central stage of political rituals, the crucial events of 1989 took place in other urban places in Bratislava.[22] Although the Square was among the first places to be renamed after the fall of socialist regime, the statue of K. Gottwald was only removed in 1991. Notably, the demolition of the prominent

19 Namely the streets such as 'Valónska ulica' and 'Jánska ulica' south of the Square, which were notable, apart from the old gas-station, for their many traditional wine-cellars. Compare Dušan Kováč, Bratislava 1939-1945, p. 71, and Igor Janota, *Oprášené Historky Zo Starej Bratislavy [Stories of old Bratislava]* (Albert Marenčin Vydavateľstvo PT, 2010). The Faculty of Mechanical engineering was built here and designed by a team of architects from Stavoprojekt, under the leading architect Martin Kusý.

20 'Normalisation' is the name of period of political repression following the failed attempts at political reform in Czechoslovakia in 1968 (the 'Prague Spring').

21 In direct reference to former usages and representations the Square, the mixed team of architects and artist, who were assigned for this job after winning a competition in 1976 admitted some creative inspiration stemming from wish for turning former 'Sahara' into thriving green Oasis a dignified place for the new memorial.

22 Most significant urban place during the 'Velvet Revolution' in 1989 in Bratislava was the Námestie SNP [The Square of Slovak National Uprising], which is located on the periphery of the old-town centre.

monument of the perished regime did not take the form of spontaneous popular action (the demolition was executed by the municipality) and the Square was not subjected to any further alterations. As a result, the former unitary discourse on the Square, which was based on official ideology and its immanent antagonistic pendant of individual subversion, was not simply replaced by a particular – opposing – new one, but instead by a plurality of discourses.

After 1989, an attempt was made by the new representatives of the municipality to appropriate the Square into an open public space – space of democratic representations – and it was given an exception from common legal procedures regarding organized public events. Indeed, the Square is frequently used for assemblies, rallies, protests and other public events up until today. What differs from the formerly staged rituals is the indifferent or even dissonant relationship between the spectacle of the public events and the physical environment itself. The eventual adoption of the Square as an open public space is impeded by the associations of particular spatial forms with representations of the former totalitarian regime. Despite the physical removal of the memorial of K. Gottwald, Námestie slobody is further dominated by its history, and the landscape and the 'Družba' fountain are connoted as 'socialist' and out of scale colossi. [23] It is due mainly to the Square's unmatched physical size that it is continuously used for public events. As a result, the attempt to acknowledge the Square's role as the space of political representations has remained perplexed, and the exceptional legal dispensation for public events granted by the Municipality was cancelled in 2007.

[23] In fact 'Gotko' or 'Gotvaľák' (Slovak abbreviations for 'the Gottwald's Square') remain a commonly used colloquial references of Námestie slobody The memorial of Klement Gottwald is thus haunting the imagination about the place despite its physical removal.

After 1989, other (non official) storytelling practices became possible once again. With them, alternative pictures of the Square as a space of representations, which it used to be before modern constructions took place (a place of parades, circus attractions, children), are being revived in retrospective and revisionist literature. But even the emergence of these representations of the Square do not really add to a reconciliation with contemporary society, as they rather touch the neuralgic issue of old versus new in the city development of Bratislava.

After the appropriation of the Square mostly failed, and the strict control of public space on the Square vanished after 1989, it became to be seen as an antisocial or derelict place. In local media, the site has recently being portrayed as a shabby, or even dangerous, place and site of obscenities. Whether or not such representations can be really supported by evidence, the fact is that they induce a self-fulfilling prophecy as they add to the stigmatization of the physical environment.

Multiple fragmented views on the Námestie slobody are a result of the fragmented nature of its development during the 20th Century. But

they also indicate its potential as a Monumental space, in accord with Lefebvre's description of monumental spaces of representation:

> A monumental work, like a musical one, does not have a "signified" (or "signifieds"); rather, it has a horizon of meanings: a specific or indefinite multiplicity of meanings, a shifting hierarchy in which now one, now another meaning comes momentarily to the force, by means of – and for the sake of – a particular action.[24]

[24] Lefebvre, op.cit., p. 222.

Just as the multiplicity of meanings are instrumentalized for the sake of various spatial acts in Lefebvre's theory, so the multiple views on Námestie slobody resulted in different proposals for spatial acts on, and alterations of, Námestie slobody.

Various installations of new sculptures on the Square have been proposed since the beginning of the 1990s. They should have provided a replacement for the former memorial of K. Gottwald, and were predominantly inspired by the pathos of the national history. None of these proposals were realised.[25] More recently, several public initiatives have used contemporary representational spaces as the basis of actions aimed at a re-appropriation of the Square on the level of an environment and of a representation. One example is the initiative 'Bod 0' [Point Zero], which brought together several artists who proposed various spatial alterations to the Square. All of them took the physical absence of former political symbols as their point of departure. The only installation actually performed was by the polish artist Paweł Althamer, who temporarily turned the 'Družba' fountain into a children's sandpit. In theory, it teased various representations of the space (the arranged space of the fountain, the former Square's nickname 'Sahara') and combined them with a children's playground in an attempt at creating a new situation. Due to the temporary character of the spatial installation, it did not achieve a permanent effect; moreover the value of its impact on the discussion about stigmatised post-war architecture could be questioned.

[25] An exception was a Temporary 'Memorial for the Victims of Fascism and Communist' voluntarily installed in 1991 by artist František Guldan, who reworked his concept again in 2004.

Other similar initiatives carried out by smaller stakeholders (such as the Faculty of Architecture at the STU) have beeb limited to tactical interventions, and remain far from establishing a new unitary discourse. For those decisive stakeholders such as private developers or the Municipality, who have more or less given up any further attempts to appropriate the Square, it has become an official blind-spot. Economical arguments, along with social stigmatization, are used for justifying of pragmatic economical solutions proposing demolition of the Square altogether and new commercial usage and new commercial usage.[26] In the context of private-market environment, its perception as an abstract space, with no purpose tangible by functionalist definitions, has prevailed.[27] Allegedly, costly maintenance is thus deemed unreasonable and since

[26] Such was the proposal for construction of garage house discussed since 2013.

[27] As a matter of fact, Bratislava did not have regulation master plan until 2007 and since then. The Square is symptomatically classified only vaguely as a 'green area'.

2007, the ‘Družba’ fountain has been out of order. Without further maintenance it is put at risk of suffering irreversible damage through erosion.
Different attempts at spatial interventions on the Square can be interpreted as a need for the complex renegotiation of appropriate relationships between the three forms of space – perceived, conceived and lived space. Apparently, for all of the aforementioned approaches to Námestie slobody, the strong presence of architecture from the period of the authoritarian regimes plays an instrumental role as a spatial form as well as a representation of ideology. Currently emerging as the central issue is the competition between various spaces of representation on one side and the abstract space of profit-oriented land-usage on the other.

Fig. 16: The ‘Družba’ Fountain, temporarily turned into a sandpit in 2012 (Author of the concept: Pawel Althamer / initiative ‘Bod 0’). Photo by author, 2012.

Bibliography

Jarmila Bencová, ‘Belluš Barokizujúci? Paláce Severného Predmestia.’ [‘Belluš's Baroque? Palaces of the Northern Sub-Urb’], Architektúra & Urbanizmus, 33, 1/2 (1999), 35 – 46.
Matej Blažek, ‘Thirdspace and Sub-culture: Spatialities and Identities of Hip-hop Youth in Post-socialist Housing Estate.’(School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2007).
Jean-Louis Cohen, *Architecture in Uniform; Designing and Building for the Second World War* (Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2011).

Matúš Dulla, 'Leichtes Auseinandergehen der Moderne und Tradizion', *Slowakei Architektur: Impulse und Reflexion* (Salzburg: Verlag Anton Pustet, 2003).
Matúš Dulla, *Architekt Emil Belluš* (Bratislava: Slovart, 2011).
Matúš Dulla and Henrieta Moravčíková, *Architektúra Slovenska v 20. Storočí*, (Bratislava: Slovart, 2002).
Boris Groys, Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin. Die Gespaltene Kultur in Der Sowjetunion., Gabriele Leupold (ed.), akzente (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag 1988).
Vladimír Horváth, *Bratislavský Topograficky Lexikón [Topographical Lexicon of Bratislava]* (Bratislava: Tatran, 1990).
Miroslav Hrdina, 'Architektúra na Slovensku v 40. Rokoch 20. Storočia' ['Slovak Architecture in the 1940s'] (Katedra dejín výtvarného umenia, Filozofická Fakulta Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave, 2008).
Igor Janota, *Oprášené Historky Zo Starej Bratislavy [Stories of old Bratislava]* (Albert Marenčin Vydavateľstvo PT, 2010).
Dušan Kováč, *Bratislava 1939-1945* (Albert Marenčin Vydavateľstvo PT, 2006).
Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space (*Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).
Henrieta Moravčíková, 'Monumentality in Slovak Architecture of the 1960s and 1970s: Authoritarian, National, Great and Abstract', The Journal of Architecture, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2009). Available at http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13602360802705205 [acessed at 04.01.15]
Henrieta Moravčíková, 'Bratislava', in Emily Gunzburger Makaš and Tanja Damljanović Conley (eds), *Capital Cities in the Aftermath of Empires. Planning in Central and Southeastern Europe* (Routledge, 2010), pp. 174–188.
Marián Potočár, 'The Square: "Námestie slobody" in Bratislava: Continuity and Change in Architectonic Strategies' in: H. Moravčíková, P. Szalay, M. Dulla, M. Topolčanská, M. Potočár. & K. Haberlandová (Eds.), *Modern and/or Totalitarian in the Architecture of the 20th Century in Slovakia* (Bratislava: Slovart, 2013), pp. 156 – 167
Marián Potočár, 'Námestie slobody v Bratislave', Diss. Thesis (Bratislava: Fakulta architektúry STU, 2014)
Łukasz Stanek, 'Die Produktion Des Städtischen Raums Durch Massenmediale Erzählpraktiken: Der Fall Nowa Huta', Sozialistische Städte Zwischen Herrschaft Und Selbstbehauptung. Kommunalpolitik, Stadtplanung Und Alltag in Der DDR (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2009).
Elena Stoličná, 'Architektúra Nemeckej Proveniencie Na Slovensku v Rokoch 1939 – 1945', Diss. Thesis (Bratislava: Ústav stavebníctva a architektúry, SAV, 2000).
Elena Stoličná and Jan Tabor, 'Geschichte Eines Platzes', Falker, No. 24 (2001).
Christiane Wolf, Gauforen. *Zentren der Macht: Zur nationalsozialistischen Architektur und Stadtplanung* (Verlag Bauwesen / Huss Med, 1999)

Kimberley Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

journal sources

‘Súťaž na Poštovú Budovu v Bratislave’ [The Competition for Postal Building in Bratislava], Stavebný Obzor, Vol. 1, No. 5/6 (1946), pp. 4 – 5.
Emil Belluš, ‘Slovenská Fakulta Architektúry Pri Vysokej Škole Technickej v Bratislave’, Architektura ČSR, Vol. 12, No. 8–10 (1953), pp. 221 – 227.
Emil Belluš, ‘Gottwaldovo námestie a Gottwaldov pomník’ [Gottwald’s Square and Gottwald’s Memorial], Výtvarný Život, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1961), p. 42.
Marie Benešová and Jan Svoboda, ‘Správní budova Slovenského plánovacího úřadu v Bratislavě’ [The Administrative Building of the Slovak Planning Institute in Bratislava], Architektura ČSR, Vol. 10, No. 3/4 (1951), pp. 72 – 74.
A. Brzotický, ‘Budova Zemského Úřadu v Bratislavě. Poznámky k Veřejné Soutěži a Náčrty’, Architekt SIA, Vol. 29 (1930), pp. 53 – 66.
V. Droppa and J. Hlavica, ‘Gottwaldovo Námestie v Bratislave v Novej Podobe’, Projekt, Vol. 23, No. 5 (1981), pp. 23 – 28.
Josef Havlíček et al., ‘Budova S.P.Ú. v Bratislavě’, Architektura ČSR, Vol. 10, No. 3/4 (1951), pp. 75 –80.
Miloš Chorvát, ‘Poznámky k Úvahe S. Inž. Ivana Kuhna “Doriešenie Gottwaldovho Námestia v Bratislave.”’, Architektura ČSR, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1955), pp. 90 – 93.
Miloslav Kopřiva, ‘Súťaž Na Výstavbu Slovenských Vysokých Škôl v Bratislave’, Technik, Vol. 2, No. 9 (1941), pp. 135 – 136.
Eugen Kramár, ‘Kongresovou Halou Dobudujeme Gottwaldovo Námestie’, Projekt, Vol. 7, No. 11/12 (1965), pp. 258 – 260.
Eugen Kramár, ‘Slova Tvůrců’, Architektura ČSR, Vol. 17 (1968), pp. 629 – 664.
Ivan Kuhn, ‘Doriešenie Gottwaldovho Námestia. K Výsledkom Vlaňajšej Súťaže.’, Architektura ČSR, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1955), pp. 82 – 90.
Martin Kusý, ‘Gottwaldové Námestie a Fakulta Strojného Inžinierstva v Bratislave’, Projekt, Vol. 3 (1958), pp. 6 – 7.
Jozef Lacko, ‘Strojnícka Fakulta v Bratislave’, Projekt, Vol. 4, No. 9 (1962), pp. 193.
Fratntišek Ohrablo, ‘Štefan Lukačovič’, Projekt, Vol. 25, No. 5 (1983), pp. 44.
Vladimír Pojtek, ‘Budúce Univerzitné Mesto v Bratislave’, Elán, Vol. 12, No. 9 (1942), pp. 4 – 8.
Vladimír Pojtek, ‘Budujeme Vládnu Štvrť v Bratislave’, Elán, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1943), pp. 4 – 6.
‘Súťaž Na Univerzitné Mesto v Bratislave’, Slovenský Staviteľ, Vol. 4 (1933), pp. 150 – 155.

‘Súťažné Návrhy “Vládnej Štvrti” v Bratislave’, Technický Obzor Slovenský, Vol. 7, No. 9 (1943), pp. 141 – 150.
‘Súťažné Návrhy “Vládnej Štvrti” v Bratislave’, Technický Obzor Slovenský, Vol. 7, No. 10 (1943), pp. 141 – 150.
‘Prämiierte Bauprojekte. Austellung Im Wintergarten. Austellung Im Wintergarten Des Museums.’, Grenzbote. Deutsches Tagblatt Für Die Karpathenländer, Vol. 73, No. 185 (1943), pp. 5.
‘Slávnosť Položenia Základného Kameňa Novostavby Slovenskej Vysokej Školy Technickej Na Námestí Klementa Gottwalda v Bratislave’, Technik, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1949), pp. 2 – 6.
‘Planning Competition in Bratislava’, Architectural Review, Vol. 111, No. 663 (1952), pp. 204.

ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Urban Biopower Stockholm and the Biopolitics of Creative Resistance

Hélène Frichot and Sara Vall with Sara Brolund De Carvalho, Döne Delibas, Oskar Gudehn, Matilde Kautsky, Anna Kulin, Katla Maríudóttir, Alistair Nancarrow, Malena Norlin

The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has argued that the 'camp' concived as the paradoxical space of permanent exception designed to exclude the non-citizen has now entered the centre of the contemporary city, where every citizen risks being unmasked as a stranger, or perhaps a worker who has lost his or her working visa. The biopower that organizes the invisible city-camp does so through the administration of the lives and deaths of its population, through subtle shifts in the social atmospheres of belonging and exclusion, and through the ubiquitous use of electronic pass codes, which determine access to both physical sites as well as sites of information. This paper addresses key concepts of biopolitics, biopower, and also noopolitics in order to present collaboratively work undertaken by students in Critical Studies in Architecture at KTH Architecture, Stockholm..

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

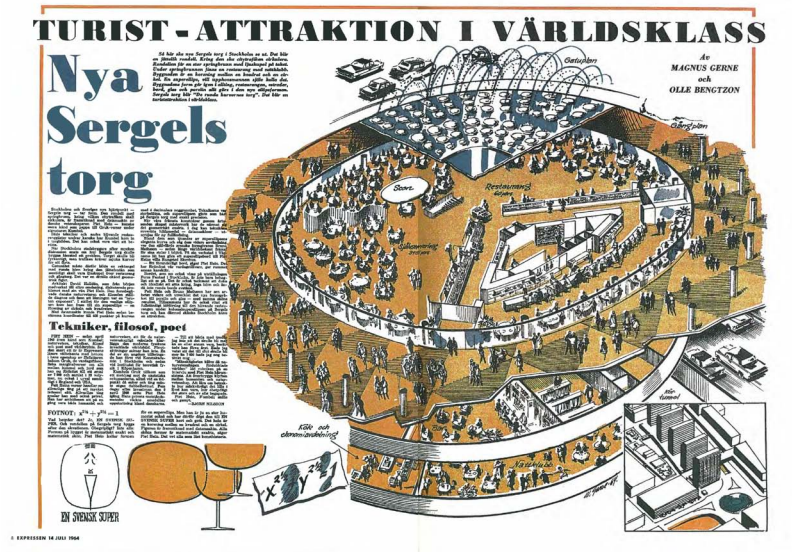


Fig. 1: Turistattraktion i Världsklass, 1964. Image originally published by Expressen Media Sweden, and featured in an Arkitektur och designcentrum exhibition catalogue Sergels Torg, Stockholm: Arkitekturmuseet, 1999.

Should you undertake an internet search for the cold northern city of Stockholm in preparation for a real or virtual visit, the pin is likely to drop on its commercial city centre, which goes by the name of Sergels Torg.[1] Since the mid-1960's Sergels Torg has taken on the role of representing the civic-commercial epicentre of Stockholm, mixing a network of commercial arcades with the impressive glass façade of the Kulturhuset [House of Culture]. Where Sergels Torg now stands, there was once the neighbourhood of Klara, all but obliterated when a post-war tabula rasa was excavated in preparation for a new central square and surrounding facilities. Unlike other European cities, Stockholm, unafflicted by the collateral damage of war, and maintaining an intact if aging built environment, required no post-war reconstruction or renewal. The clearing of the ground, the 'urban renewal' of Klara instead involved the mass demolition of existing homes and workplaces. Despite many protests at the time, the civic and commercial hub of Sergels Torg has been held up as exemplary, a vision of the 'world class' city. On the south side of Sergels Torg, the façade of Kulturhuset - purportedly an inspiration to the architects of the Centre Pompidou, Beaubourg, Paris - speaks the optimistic language of the transparency of democratic process. Large in scale, the Kulturhuset is a lone concession to culture, and otherwise, all around, as far as the consumer cares to wander, there is arranged a complex, highly articulated diagram of communication, shopping malls leading into department stores seemingly extending in all directions. There is an early image, dated 1964, of Sergels Torg graphically describing a layer-cake of circulating urban carousels and presenting this new vision of urban organization as a world-class tourist attraction [Turistattraktion

[1] In fact, depending on which search engine you use, you will land at different points designating the centre of Stockholm: Map Quest locates the centre of Stockholm on the grounds of Klara Kyrka (Klara Church) http://www.mapquest.com/maps?city=Stockholm&country=SE; Google Maps lands on a building between Jakobsgatan and Fredsgatan, east of Akademigränd; Via Michelin maps lands directly on Sergels Torg http://www.viamichelin.com/web/Maps/Map-Stockholm-_-Stockholms_lan-Sweden?strLocid=31NDF6eHcxMGNOVGt1TXpNeU9BPT1jTVRndU1EWTBPVFU9; as does the search engine www.eniro.se. [All sites accessed 01/11/2012]

i Världsklass] (see Figure 1). The 1964 depiction of Sergels Torg expresses all the signifiers of funky late fifties to early sixties graphic design deploying a screen print or wood-block aesthetic to describe an urban vision in three colours: black for outlines and details, ochre yellow and teal blue for patches of highlight colour. There is the compelling message of a bright and optimistic future strangely reminiscent of Jacques Tati's movie Playtime, which was shot between the years 1964-1967, making these remarkably similar images directly contemporaneous.

The famous closing scenes of Jacques Tati's movie Playtime depicts traffic circling endlessly around a carousel in orderly slow motion.[2] Cars and buses are rendered harmless and exhaust-free, the modern city here is clean, organized and efficiently engineered across the built environment, which seamlessly incorporates the social fabric. Everyone in their place, everyone with a role to play, even if that role is to harmlessly disrupt this machinic assemblage with haplessly clownish antics such as those performed by Monsieur Hulot. Minor disruptions to the smooth workings of the urban machine merely show how well it recuperates its rhythm once the disturbance has been assimilated.[3] A geometrically composed public garden and inoffensive spiraling public sculpture sit at the centre of the traffic carousel, and curtain-glass tower blocks frame the action on the street, with vehicular traffic being placed at the top of the traffic hierarchy. Pedestrians are to be discovered somewhat lower down in the order of things, securely located on the trottoirs. Street markets are lined up with their wares displayed in elegant arrangements, and supermarkets are articulated according to a highly legible spatial syntax. While perfectly kept, and immaculately maintained, the whole also operates according to a just-in-time logic, because, after all, the modern urban market place must be prepared to offer ever new experiences to its delighted and captivated publics. And so, fresh paint will not be quite dry when the restaurant opens, but you can be reassured that your evening of entertainment will unfold delightfully. It is exactly this scene of Tati's trafficked carousel that came to mind when I first set eyes on Sergels Torg, Stockholm, Sweden.

This optimistic image of Sergels Torg is spatially represented as a carved out axonometric peopled with busy urban consumers stacked on four levels, the top level being designated for vehicular traffic, which circles endlessly around a fountain. Peeping out of the lower right-hand corner of the image there is another underground car thoroughfare evidently designed for more rapid moving through-traffic desirous of circumventing the slower carousel above. In the left lower corner there is an explanatory 'concept' diagram of two sections cut through two cocktail glasses, which appear to designate the logic of the specific shape of the squared-circle or 'super-ellipse' that is Sergels Torg in plan. Sergels Torg is also patterned with a repeated triangular super graphic that resulted from the chance decision to retain the drainage notations from a site plan.[4] The emphasis on salubrious entertainment and its associated urban economies pre-empts Pine and Gilmore's famous welcome to the experience economy of 1998,[5] and clearly communicates an upbeat, modern notion of city

2 For the relevant excerpt from Jaqcues Tati's film Playtime see: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCxTsK6NeF0. [Accessed 29/04/2012].

3 In this recognition of the workings of the traffic carousel in Jacques Tati's Playtime, I am much inspired by Louise Mackenzie's research on 'Tativille' and the role of the circular boulevard or merry-go-round-a-bout, presented in the Architecture+Philosophy Public Lecture series in 2007, curated by Esther Anatolitis and Hélène Frichot, Melbourne, Australia. See http://architecture.testpattern.com.au/2007.htm [Accessed 01/11/2012].

4 For a brief history, in Swedish, of Sergels Torg see the catalogue publication, *Sergels Torg*, (Stockholm: Arkitekturmuseet, 1999).

5 See B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, (Watertown, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).

living and the unbridled, unproblematised consumption of city life as daily experience. The stacking and layering of activities describes a more complex diagram of urban circulation than the carousel of Tati's Playtime, but the emphasis on movement and delighted enjoyment is much the same. Except that a crucial distinction is at work between Tati's satirical message, and the serious intentions associated with the design of Sergels Torg, which eagerly claims membership status in the realm of what the philosopher and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari has called Integrated World Capitalism.

Fig. 2: Biopolitical Map 01: *The Electronic Eyes of the City*. Katla Maurídóttir and Sara Brolund Fernandes De Carvalho have mapped all the registered commercial surveillance cameras across the central business district of Stockholm, discovering an urban field populated by a ubiquity of electronic urban eyes.

Amidst such a scene of urban optimism what kinds of diverse social relations are at work, and how do subjectivities and their expressed points of view come to be co-constituted with their built environments? The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has argued that the 'camp' conceived as the paradoxical space of permanent exception designed to exclude the non-citizen, has now entered the centre of the contemporary city where every citizen risks being unmasked as a stranger, or perhaps a worker who has lost his or her working visa. The biopower that organizes the invisible city-camp does so through the administration of the lives and deaths of its population, through subtle shifts in the social atmospheres of affect of belonging and exclusion, and through the ubiquitous use of electronic pass codes, which determine access to both physical sites as well as sites of information. In reference to the specific site of Sergels Torg, this essay will address key concepts such as biopolitics, biopower, and also noopolitics in

order to present collaborative design research undertaken by students in Critical Studies in Architecture, KTH School of Architecture Stockholm, in the Autumn term of 2012. As an initial task participants in the design studio were invited to imagine, through ficto-critical means, the aesthetic personae of urban subjectivities who promise to reveal the multiplicitous blind spots that emerge and subside amidst the otherwise optimistic inaugural visions of Stockholm's city centre. Interrupting the progression of this essay a series of voices will be heard, each attempting to situate their own point of view, each experimenting with how to express their subjectivity amidst perceived and real constraints.

I am Mes, my mom calls me "Messi". I'm a twelve year old boy. I am an outsider. I am on the run – not because I've committed a crime, but because I do not own papers; documents. These documents allow me to call myself a citizen, whatever that means.

I ran away because I'm trying to buy us some time. My mom and I will be deported. But we can't go back.

I am stressed about being caught. I feel like I'm being watched all the time, there are cameras everywhere, especially in the city center. But that's also where I get food and have access to toilets. I try to blend in, become invisible. Since I am considered a kid, I have to be extra careful where and at what time I'm seen. If I break from the accepted urban behavior I will blow my cover.

The Critical Studies design studio, generated out of the ongoing research and teaching-learning efforts of the group FATALE (Feminism Architecture Theory Analysis Laboratory Education), is engaged in how to critically analyse and creatively act into the micro-political power relations of the everyday.[6] We are interested in how, as thinking-architects, we can create affirmative existential territories for different subjectivities. In the Autumn term of 2012 we posed the question: whose working body belongs where in the everyday, 9-5 context of inner city Stockholm? As the human geographer Nigel Thrift has pointed out, cities are "roiling maelstroms of affect. Particular affects like anger, fear, happiness and joy are continually on the boil, rising here, subsiding there, and these affects continually manifest themselves in events which can take place either at a grand scale or simply as a part of continuing everyday life."[7] Affect entails a reciprocal capacity, the power to affect, and a receptiveness toward being affected. The affects that compose our subject positions determine how far we are capable of acting in a given situation. The city is an affective ecology, a machinic assemblage of so many bubbles of becoming on the boil, frothing and heaving and jostling each other across mental, social and environmental ecologies. Human and nonhuman actors brush up alongside each other, increasing and diminishing each other's compositions through the arousal of sad passions and happy affects.

6 See Meike Schalk, Brady Burroughs, Katja Grillner, Katarina Bonnevier, "FATALE: Critical Studies in Architecture" in *Nordic Journal of Architecture*, Vol. 2, 2012, pp. 90-96.

7 Thrift, "Spatialities of Feeling" in Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 171-197, p. 172.

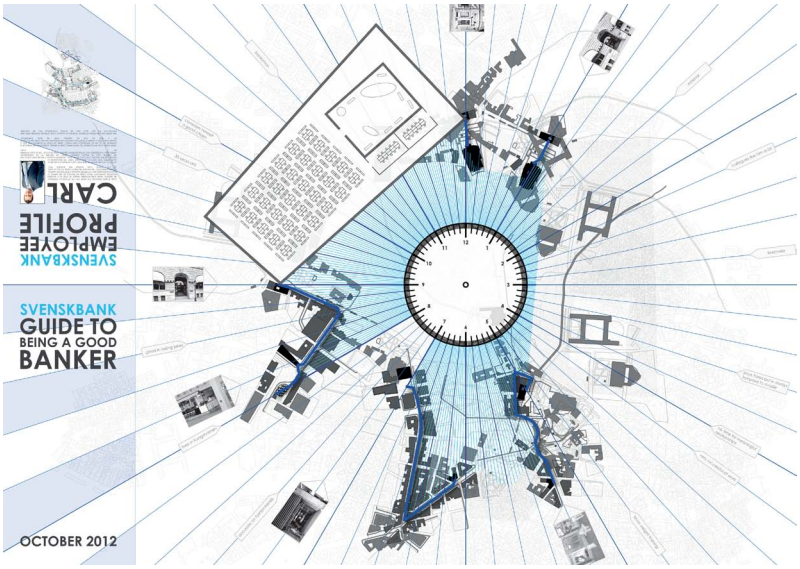


Fig. 3: Biopolitical Map 02: *Time is money for Karl the economist*. Alistair Nancarrow has created a map of Karl's working day where not a moment is left-over, but either consumed with effective economically productive labour or a work on the body to maintain its fitness as a legitimate, bio-powerful citizen.

I am Maria, a 60 year old street musician without legal documents. I pretend to be an drug-addict in order to not draw too much attention to the fact that I'm a so called healthy starving human being in Sweden – a non-citizen.

I play the accordion on the streets of Stockholm, mainly on Drottningsgatan, for two reasons: because a fairly large amount of people pass by here every day, and because I like to feel like I am part of a busy cosmopolitan setting. I used to live in a city much larger than Stockholm and I miss the intensity, that feeling of disappearing into the crowd and being a part of it: To belong to something even if it's for just a short moment. I like it when someone smiles at me – when they like my music. Even if some smiles are out of pity – they are smiles and that means that I'm not yet completely invisible.

I know some of the other street musicians that hang around in the center. Most of them are Swedish or legal migrants, but there are two others like me with whom I share the accordion. There are also others that hang around Sergels Torg that are homeless, drunks, drug addicts and some just like me...those with no future.

I go to Klara church every day to pray for the safety of myself and for my family back home. I thank God for keeping me alive and for not letting me starve. Volunteers from the church come every day to Sergels Torg with a small wagon with food. They have offered to help me, but they can't give me what I really need, and that is legal documents that would make me untouchable and lift me up from the streets.

We have commenced from the centre of Stockholm city at Sergels Torg in order to map the everyday trajectories of working bodies – broadly defined – and to explore to what extent biopolitical acts of creative resistance can be used to disrupt the modulated control of the city-camp, assuming that such a structure exists in our midst. This requires the examination of displaced bodies; disrupted flows of migrant labour; the workless; the homeless; as well as those privileged citizens who make the city their own through their rhythms of work, leisure and consumption. All these diverse subjectivities own a reciprocal relation with their architectural environments determining where on the spectrum between city and camp a contemporary city can be perceived to be at any given moment. We want to ask, what kinds of micro-acts of creative architectural resistance can enable us to rethink our occupation of the city as working embodied subjects?

Thrift has warned that the atmospheres of affect we occupy as urban dwellers are increasingly open to political manipulation; "the discovery of new means of practicing affect," Thrift asserts, "is also the discovery of a whole new means of manipulation by the powerful."[8] Power in relation to affect suggests a greater capacity to act and to achieve self-determination, but the powerful also have their own blind-spots, whereby their habits of life make others invisible.

I'm Karl, a man of habit. My workday has started before I've even arrived at Sergels Torg. With the systematization of time as my ally, I've used the train journey to organise my daily tasks, right down to the last nanosecond. Perhaps that's why I'm such a good economist, because I use my time effectively. Today will be very, very productive.

I'm greeted at Sergels Torg by the familiar sounds of peak hour. There is an energy here that motivates my pace. My passage down Hamngatan starts swiftly as usual. I stop only for my morning coffee. This morning I am frustrated when my journey is interrupted by an elderly gentleman. I recognise him vaguely; he often plays chess at Kungsträdgården. His pace is so slow, what purpose does a pace of this speed have? I side step him hurriedly and continue briskly to the office.

As expected, the workday is a success. I've accomplished much. I love my job and it is very well paying. My path back to Hötorget Metro takes me past Stureplan and along Kungsgatan. The buildings here are beautiful. For a moment they occupy my thoughts and I wonder if the streets behind are lined with the same striking

[8] Thrift, "Spatialities of Feeling", op.cit., p. 173..

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

architecture. Had I more time I would like to explore them, but I see of Stockholm only what I need to and as I reach the Metro my thoughts slip subconsciously back into the realm of economics and I am left to organise the tasks of tomorrow, which will undoubtedly be as productive as today.

As part of our process we have, through ficto-critical means or by way of fact-ional admixtures of news reports, testimonies, conversations, urban myth, fiction and the powers of the imaginary, depicted profiles of urban workers. These have emerged as the aesthetic personae of: shoplifters, economists, paperless refugees, the homeless, retirees who play chess, street musicians disguising their paperless refugee status, children, the desire lines of urban wanderers and itinerants. The urban worker manifests in many forms, and we have sought to follow his or her wanderings by way of certain non-human actors, which we have explored by way of the spatial archetypes of: urban gateways; cells; foyers; and office landscapes. We propose that via each of these aesthetic personae, human and non-human alike, certain carriers of significance or key affects can be identified that manifest through very specific points of view upon the city. Through these points of view we acknowledge that any vision of the city is partial, fragmented, deeply interested (never disinterested), and composed somewhat like a fragile existential bubble or precarious umwelt.[9]

Good morning, my name is Marcello and I live in south Stockholm with my cat Bella. The apartment is rather small but I like it and I´ve been living here for a really long time. I rent one of the rooms out to a student, since my pension is very low. The first time felt strange, 20 years ago, but now I enjoy it – the students keep my mind younger and I learn about how youngsters think today.

On those days I don't spend time with my granddaughter I take the metro to the centre of Stockholm. I cross Sergels Torg from the exit of the metro to go into Kulturhuset, where I go straight to the chess corner to see if some of my friends are there. I spend time in the chess corner, playing chess, looking at and discussing the games of others and also chit-chatting about what has happened since last time we met.

I really like this part of Kulturhuset. It is a kind of foyer in the middle of the building, close to the communication core. We can see a lot of people coming and going, and they can see us. Another good thing is that it costs nothing to be here. We don´t have to pay or buy anything, we simply have to behave according to the rules of Kulturhuset.

There are a few other spaces like this nearby, which I sometimes like to visit. For example, Strömmen, on the waterfront. Here some friends of mine go fishing on sunny days, or whenever they want, this is also a free activity, everyone is allowed to fish here, as long as they follow some rules.

9 Uexküll uses the term 'umwelt' or environment-world as a way of describing the intimate, even 'dovetailed' fit between an organism and its environment. See Jakob von Uexküll, "A Stroll through the Worlds of Animals and Men" in Claire H. Schiller, ed., *Instinctive Behaviour*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1957), pp. 5-76, p. 11.

The city can be conceived as a camp, as Agamben argues, in that it is regulated by implicit and explicit rules, and the way the architectural environment is organized supports this systemization of our behavior. Architecture in this way is inherently ambivalent, the best of intentions can produce the most oppressive effects. Despite occasional appearances, architecture is also inherently conservative in that its primary task is to conserve life, to keep life sheltered. Architecture conserves life making society itself sufficiently durable, but as a result it also holds the power to impose forms of life on a politics as it can both curtail or augment our affects, increasing or decreasing our capacity to engage in our existential territories.

The history of Sergels Torg reveals its own inaugural violence, being the result not of post-war attempts to modernize a war stricken European city, but instead the outcome of planned demolition, a clearing of the historical ground of the district of Klara toward the installation of a new vision of what a city centre as public forum and place of gathering could be. As Walter Benjamin has argued in his essay *The Critique of Violence*, processes of law making and law preserving, which, for the purposes of this essay can be seen to be at work in the determination of public space, often shelter at their inception violent upheaval.[10] It is in this context too that Benjamin introduces the important concept of 'mere life', which influences Agamben's extended meditations on the figure of homo sacer or 'bare life'.[11] A Saturday morning visit to Sergels Torg reveals diverse groupuscules practicing their fleeting or more resilient collective enunciations: An Iranian protest rally; hens' parties expressing varying ethnicities; a Justin Bieber fan club; and my own 4 year old child speeding around in swooping arcs across the super-graphic paving on his scooter. It is across this otherwise innocuous, utterly arbitrary pattern of elongated triangles that Stockholm's exemplary site of political protest and fleeting unrest comes to be periodically staged.

Sergels Torg was originally designed as a 24 hour hub, but as a studio group we came to question the implication of such a desire for tireless activity, and its inherent suggestion of a 24 hour around the clock workshop toward the normalized construction of subjectivities. Together we reflected upon how public space is inherently ambivalent in its function, and is composed of as many blind spots, mute cries and invisibilities, as visibilities, recognizable statements and icons.

I am a shoplifter. I am very lonely.

I don't trust the people around me. They could be a civil guard. Even though they look nice, with a white down west and a shopping bag made of thick shiny paper. Even if they are standing at the bus-stop. In a suite, scrolling on their cellphone. I don't trust anyone on the street.

[10] "For with mere life the rule of law over the living ceases." Benjamin, "The Critique of Violence", p. 297.

[11] Agamben takes Benjamin's 'mere life' and calls it 'bare life', also translated as 'naked life'. This term designates the life that is paradoxically included in the determination of the law by its very exclusion, and even its sacrifice. Bare life is at the same time excluded by and included in, or captured by the political order, including the means by which the polis comes to be defined. The non-citizen, who is not protected by the laws of a nation-state (or polis) can be seen as an exemplary expression of mere, or bare, or naked life. The laws of a nation-state exclude this body, but by this exclusion further asserts the customs, rituals, laws and boundary conditions by which the nation-state distinguishes itself. This similarly can be applied to an analysis of the city. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 8-9.

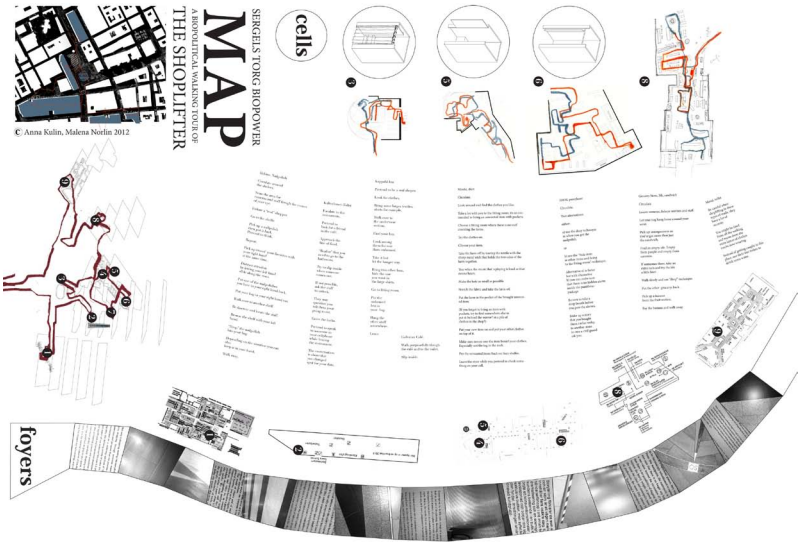


Fig. 4: *Shopping Cells and Places to Hide my Kleptomania*. Malena Norlin and Anna Kulin have sought to compose the city from the precariously constructed subjective point of view of the adolescent shoplifter.

I often look over my shoulder.

I sit down on a stair made of stone, not in the corner where the dogs pee, but in the middle. And I have a smoke. If someone moves in my direction my heart starts to race.

All the colorful stuff in this store. I want all of those colors in my home. I want all of those colors in my soul. I put all of those colors in my bag.

I'm paranoid, even though they only took me three times out of 3 million.

I feel persecuted all the way home. Sometimes the feeling goes away when i enter the subway train and the doors closes behind me, but mostly it takes til I get home.

I lie to my mother about all this. She must think that it's sale all year around and that my friends are very bountiful. I also tell her that I get stuck in doors often, that´s why many of my t-shirts and pullovers have holes in them.

My first boyfriend cut a hole in his backpack, he said he was inspired by me. The hole was a long thin slot against his back. So he could come along on my shoplifting tours and put expensive cheese in his backpack through the hole, his arm turned in a straind motion and we walked out in the streets and it stank cheese in a cloud around us.

It happens pretty often that I don't remember all the things I've taken when I get home. I pick up surprises from my bag. Sometimes these surprises makes my stomach hurt.

Figure 05: Malena Norlin, A Tree in Segels Torg, photomontage (2012) Malena responded to the final stage of the Urban Biopower Stockholm design studio project by reflecting on the famous battle of the elm trees in Kunsträdgården on May 11 and 12 1971. The elm trees were threatened by the construction of a metro (TBana) station. The protesters won the battle, many of the trees were saved, and the metro station was relocated. As a commentary on the right to protest in the city, and as an experiment in forms of creative resistance that can be exerted to stake a claim on public space, Malena proposed a elm tree inspired intervention at Sergels Torg.

I don't wan't my mom to ever get to know this, I would rather kill myself allmost, I feel so ashamed. But I feel proud in front of my boyfriends. They call me ganster bitch and I love it. They tell me I'm brave and cool.

My second boyfriend didn't want me to shoplift when he was around. When we were at home he argued that it's nothing morally wrong with shoplifting and his arguments are well substantiated with political theories. I never read those theories because I don't know where to find them and if I did it wouldn't matter because I'm not good at sitting still.

One thing I like about shoplifting is that it keeps my mind off all the other stuff going on inside me. I have to stay very focused. The feeling of stress when I pass the alarms in the entrance of the store puts a layer around all the strong feelings I allready have inside. It´s like wrapping feelings in several plastic bags. They help me (although they are transparent).

I have a large bag without a zip, the handles are long and it´s easy to drop un-alarmed items into it. The alarmed stuff has to go with me into the fitting room. I wear nice clothes and I try to look like an ordinary person. I cannot be myself.

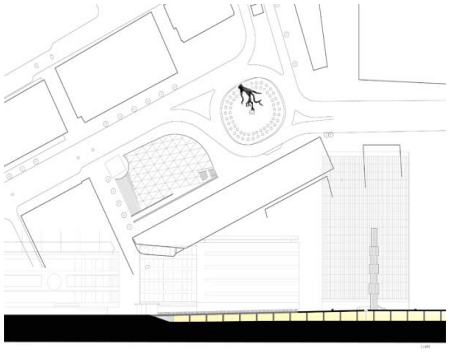


Fig. 6: Malena Norlin, A Tree in Segels Torg, photomontage (2012)
A ladder leads down from the elm tree intervention and fountain into the arcade below.

Fig. 7: A Tree in Sergels Torg Malena Norlin (2012)
Plan and section through ficto-critical elm tree intervention at Sergels Torg

To explore how power relations produce varying atmospheres of affect in the urban centre, we have borrowed a perhaps controversial terminological distinction from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, a distinction they draw out between the concepts of 'biopower' and 'biopolitics'. In Commonwealth they argue that where biopower suggests a power over life, and how a population is administered according to its life and death, biopolitics is instead the "minor current that insists on life as resistance."[12] Such a distinction is not necessarily clear in the work of Michel Foucault, where concepts including biopolitics and the rise of governmentality from the 18th century and their correspondence with the rise of Capitalism have been genealogically mapped.[13] The distinction has helped us dramatise the heterogeneous effects of power relations and related circulations of affect across a spectrum between emancipatory and oppressive effects, which could also be tentatively described as a spectrum extending between the imposition of capital 'P', Power from above, as distinct from the emergence, self-organisation or mobilization of power relations from below.

Generally, biopolitics and biopower are used interchangeably, and this makes the task difficult. Thomas Lemke explains with respect to biopolitics that "The objects of biopolitics are not singular human beings but their biological features measured and aggregated on the level of populations."[14]

[12] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 57.

[13] See Maurizio Lazzarato, "From Biopower to Biopolitics", in *Pli*, 13, 2002, pp. 99-113, p. 99.

[14] Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*, (New York: New York University Press, 2011), p. 5.

Biopolitics can be registered as a specific political knowledge, and has impacted on the development of such disciplines as statistics, demography, epidemiology, and biology, that is, disciplines through which populations can be managed via practices of correction, exclusion, normalization, disciplining, therapeutics, and optimization. Following Hardt and Negri, and also Maurizio Lazzarato, we distinguish this definition of biopolitics as 'biopower.'

Maurizio Lazzarato, like Hardt and Negri, subtly draws out the distinction between biopower and biopolitics in the concluding lines of his essay, From Biopower to Biopolitics. Biopower, Lazzarato explains, is the management of life at the scale of populations, and is the means by which the conditions of existence of a population are reproduced, constrained or regulated.[15] Importantly for our critique, it is about the "harnessing of life's forces for work."[16] Nevertheless, it is important to stress that biopower is by no means monolithic, and that the power relations through which biopower is organized are, as Lazzarato explains: "virtual, non-stable, non-localizable, non-stratified potentialities", which can become actualized, for instance, in the form of the statements and visibilities of institutions of the nation-state, or of beo-liberal market capitalism. Power relations can become progressively more stabilized or stratified, capturing bodies, and organising assemblages of working, laboring bodies. Biopolitics, which we would prefer to reserve for creative modes of resistance, suggests that amidst such stratifications of power there is always a little room to move, perhaps even an opportunity to enunciate the 'I would prefer not to…', or to slow down a little, or else to speed up suddenly. Perhaps it would be better to identify a dynamic field, ever in flux, of biopolitical relations, emerging from immanent material admixtures of bodies of all kinds, and then to suggest that at crucial junctures across this field biopower coagulates, or else, biopolitical relations remain fluid, finding the means to redefine themselves. The spaces where there is sufficient room to move are what could be identified as the blind spots, the spaces that have not yet been overwritten, the generative spaces where creative resistance can still emerge. This resistance, which emerges where there is sufficient play (or room to move) in the system, facilitates the very condition of possibility of power relations, that is to say, 'resistance comes first'. Here, rather than imagining the blind spot as that threatening locus of non-seeing or invisibility, the blind spot may exactly delimit those locations where new and unexpected forms of existence can emerge. Modes of creative resistance may need to carve out blind spots that are "vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers" so that control can be eluded.[17]

The crucial point we have attempted to mobilise in our collective design studio work, which Lazzarato draws attention to, and which Gilles Deleuze has discussed at length when reading Foucault's work, is that creative resistance comes first, which is only apparently paradoxical. As Foucault insists "so, resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the

15 Lazzarato, 'From Biopower to Biopolitics', p. 179.

16 Ibid., p. 100.

17 Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990*, (Martin Jouguin trans., New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) p. 175.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

other forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So I think resistance is the main word, the key word, in this dynamic."[18] Lazzarato in turn elaborates this curious and seemingly paradoxical formulation (how can resistance come first if by definition it surely must be resisting something?) by stressing that power comes from below (so in fact we should be extremely wary of models that oppose top down to bottom up in our emerging societies of control). Lazzarato writes "power is an integration, a coordination and determination of the relations between a multiplicity of forces" and "the emphasis should be placed upon relations not terms."[19] To create and to recreate is to resist, as Foucault insists. And yet this is not just to do with the expressions of bodies, and how their data is collected, and their behaviour adapted, but also on how thinking is channeled, and cognitive ability shaped. To complement biopolitics, and biopower, Lazzarato introduces a further term, noopolitics, derived from the ancient Greek word nous, for mind or intellect. This is the ensemble of techniques of control exercised on the brain, and especially on multiple brains operating in unwitting collaboration.[20]

Reading Lazzarato, the Swedish philosopher, Sven Olof Wallenstein explains that contemporary capitalism "no longer bases itself on labour, the factory, and the institutions that regulate the relations between them, but on a 'collaboration of brains.'"[21] The globally integrated organization of capital increasingly exploits the collective intelligence of our cognitive facilities, as we come to be trained as docile minds, fed by media, plugged into our screens, feeding and being fed information by our smart phones, exporting our self-reflective capacities into our external hardware. Wallenstein concludes his essay by arguing that critical theory itself needs to be rethought, rather than discarded wholesale, to grapple with the implications of this augmentation of biopower through noopower. And this has been part of our ongoing challenge in the Critical Studies Design studio.

To rethink power relations at the nexus of the embodied mind, across biopower, biopolitics and noopolitics, a labour Foucault began, and a work elaborated by thinkers such as Maurizio Lazzarato, Gilles Deleuze, Giorgio Agamben, Judith Butler, Rosi Braidotti, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, enables at least a small arena for the possibility of a creative and critical response to the problems we perceive in our urban contexts. This traffic in ideas also lends itself to the deployment of what we have called feminist design power tools, which include: the use of ficto-criticism; an emphasis on minoritarian voices; a sensitivity to the reciprocal affective relations that circulate between subjectivities and (architectural and urban) environments; moments of parody; and modes of mapping that attempt to 'follow the material' at a micro-scale. Through the specific practice of ficto-critical projections, we follow the intricate imbrication of formations of subjectivity whose points of view express diverse visions and modes of inhabitation of the constructed environment. The voices enunciated above

[18] Foucault cited in Lazzarato, "From Biopower to Biopolitics", op.cit., pp. 104-105.

[19] Lazzarato, 'From Biopower to Biopolitics', op.cit., p. 107.

[20] Maurizio Lazzarato, 'The Concepts of Life and the Living in the Societies of Control' in Martin Fuglsang and Bent Meier Sorensen, eds. *Deleuze and the Social*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006, p. 186).

[21] Sven Olof Wallenstein, "Noopolitics, Life and Architecture" in Deborah Hauptman and Warren Neidlich, eds, *Cognitive Architecture. From Biopolitics to Noopolitics. Architecture & Mind in the Age of Communication and Information*, (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2010, p. 54).

are necessarily limited, a small sampling of a larger murmur and hum of voices that express the life of a city. If we commence as architects by mapping the diversity and conflicting positions these constructed points of view offer, we might explore what it means to follow the fractured line between resistance and creation.[22] Then through minor, sometimes incidental actions of everyday creative resistance new styles of life might be allowed to emerge, rather than being repressed and homogenized into dull refrains, sound-bytes and platitudes.

[22] Lazzarato, "From Biopower to Biopolitics", op.cit., p. 110.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Why should one care about such a shack and its final five years?

An interdisciplinary project at the intersection of education, research, design and practice – The University of Neighbourhoods [UdN]

Editing and Assembling: Bernd Kniess & Ben Pohl

Contributing Co-Authors: Monika Alovjanovic,, Benjamin Becker, Aron Bohmann, Sebastian Bührig, Maria Burkhardt, Stefanie Graze, Charlotte Herbst, Katrin Hovy, Bernd Kniess, Tabea Michaelis, Meghan McAllister, Ben Pohl, Hans Vollmer

Team UdN: Prof. Bernd Kniess, Dipl.-Ing. Benjamin Becker, Dipl.-Ing. Stefanie Gernert, M.Sc. Ben Pohl, Stefanie Graze, Tina Steiger

Hamburg Wilhelmsburg is located on the Elbe Islands, which is the second largest inhabited river island after Manhattan.[1] It houses approximately 55.000 people. Embraced by the river Elbe, the district is not well connected to the centre of Hamburg despite its proximity, and has instead become associated with harbour facilities, working class, immigrants and disused industrial sites. In 2007 the Municipality of Hamburg established the International Building Exhibition Hamburg 2013 (IBA Hamburg) in order to regenerate the area. The neighbourhood therefore is undergoing a dramatic change, which provokes an ambivalent situation and a point of departure for discussing and re-considering contemporary practices of planning and urban design as well as the role of education.

[1] http://www.iba-hamburg.de/service/pressebereich/pressemitteilung-detailansicht/presseartikel/iba-hamburg-wagt-grossen-sprung-ins-jahr-2013.html -> 23.08.2013.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Introduction

The "University of Neighbourhoods" (UdN) was established in this context as an experimental set up by the Urban Design faculty of the HafenCity University (HCU) Hamburg, in cooperation with the IBA Hamburg and Kampnagel[2] to develop and test contemporary forms of pedagogy at the intersection of culture, knowledge and urban development.
The project put topics and questions from the fields of education, urban research and design into practice. It investigated urban design as a series of processes of transformation that are concerned with the architectural, social, cultural and economic fabric of the contemporary European city. Bringing back to life and appropriating a disused building, the project used the 1:1 scale to test an architectural low-budget transformation through the means of programme, usage and relation to the neighbourhood.

A Randonneé[3] in 27 of n Takes[4]

This text discusses some of the issues raised through and in the UdN with a particular focus on the role of pedagogy in spatial disciplines. It brings up, in a series of takes and interludes, a variety of projects that have been conducted within the UdN together with students, teaching staff, artists, professionals and interested neighbours: the "Intercultural kitchen" (since 2009), the "Wilhelmsburg Orchestra" (since 2009), organizing a local soccer tournament (2010), the "Ghettoakademie" (Theatre and Performance since 2010), urban gardening in an adjacent public park (2011-2013), the "MADE IN Workshop" (2011), The Cairo

2 The partners of UdN were the International Building Exhibition Hamburg 2013 (IBA Hamburg 2013), a city-development tool in Germany that combines political and private interests, with federal, communal and private money, and Kampnagel Internationale Kulturfabrik – Hamburg, a performing arts and theatre centre.

3 According to Serres, a Randonneé is a procedure of odyssey, which initially does not seek the connection between two points, nor the confirmation of an argument nor to solve a problem, but rather a situational embarking on a journey of discovery, which walks through the field of examination physically, as well as through texts and theories (cf. Serres 2008).

4 A "take" is a term used in music recording or film production. We understand "takes" as variations of the approach, experimental set-ups and research questions, each one with a shift in the parameters of the tools, methods, circumstances or questions regarding a common subject, leading to a catalogue of patterns of options and possibilities, and the discovery of blind-spots in the field.

5 "Messy" and "Multi-Voiced" refer to a form of ethnographic text that,supports a process of open-end dialogical ethnographic work. Messy texts seek to engage reader and writer mutually. As Denzin writes with reference to Marcus, 'Messy texts are many sited, intertextual, always open ended, and resistant to theoretical holisms, [...] they are always multivoiced, and no given interpretation is previleged.' Norman K. Denzin, Interpretive Ethnography, (Sage, 1997) p. xvii, 224.

Urban Transformation Neighbourhood Workshop (2012) and the "UdN Summercamps" (2011-2013), the International Summerschools (2009-2011), and, finally, the "Hotel?Wilhelmsburg" Project composed of 11 International Building Workshops (2012-2013).

Rather than aiming for conclusions, however, this text is meant to open up the field for interpretation and conversation. To reflect this approach, we have therefore decided to use the form of a "messy" and "multi-voiced"[5] text. These multifaceted perspectives and polyphonic voices derive from several loops and iterations of our research in practice over the past five years.[6]

[6] "Like crystals, Eisenstein's montage, the jazz solo, or the pieces in a quilt." (Denzin/Lincoln 2005), p. 6. This text samples a bricolage of approaches.

Take #0.0: Context

Elbinsel Wilhelmsburg, beyond the official Hamburg map. South of Hamburg harbour. Reiherstieg district. Here, where in February 1962 the flood broke the dikes. A bricolage of Gründerzeit perimeter developments

Why should one care about such a shack and its final five years? Bernd Kniess & Ben Pohl

sintered-bricks of the thirties and bare frugality of German federal post-war architecture. Styrofoam-wrapped and repainted, interspersed with World War II bunkers, single family homes, small business- and workshop-buildings, overgrown industrial areas, storage containers, trucks, dikes and canals. Politically neglected during the 1970s. Today, the district of arrival, a place to live and work for people from 158 different nations. Expensive cars, deep poverty, colourful, noisy, vivid 24/7. Hopes, imaginations, satellite dishes. Only twenty minutes to the main railway station, but far away from the "Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg".

Amidst this assemblage, hidden in dense wild greenery, an ordinary one-story building from the 1950s built and used as a residential home for unwed women. Then, for a long time, it was the district's health department. Still as such in the awareness of the neighbourhood, although it was withdrawn from formal use more than 15 years ago. A shack without any function, in a state of complete neglect caused by vandalism over the years: broken windows, garbage, no electricity, water or heating. The owner has given it an expiry date. At the end of 2013 the site will be cleared of all structural remains.

Why should one care about such a shack and its final five years?

Take #0.1: The Joint Venture

In 2007 a student competition was launched by the IBA, entitled "Experiment on the Island".[7] The brief asked for a design for the "temporary use of the empty premises of the former health authority building as an IBA Exhibition Pavilion".[8] But it wasn't quite clear what for. Most submissions to the competition proposed tabula rasa: the demolition of the building and the building of a new structure. Not the winning one, which proposed a strategy of architectural transformation of the

7 http://www.iba-hamburg.de/service/pressebereich/presseitteilung-detailansicht/presseartikel/experiment-auf-der-insel-studentenwettbewerb-entschieden.html

8 Ibid. (all quotes from the competition brief)

existing building and to work with local actors.[9] Even this proposal had its weakness in spending the whole budget with a professional architectural transformation at the beginning and still having no ideas of the uses, actors and a program for the given timeframe of five years.

The question arose, what is the program and use? Who are the actors and how do we find them? Which are their specific areas of interest?

Take #1: University as a Statement in the Neighbourhood

Besides the political will to establish a link between the IBA2013 and the newly founded HafenCity Universität, there was no specific aim nor an idea for a program to be implemented: rather the institutional cooperation was driven by a will for representation and a small amount of money for doing this. It was clear, however, that we would have the site for a period of five years.

Taking this up as an opportunity, we used the window between the building's final demolition, the island's accelerated urban transformation processes through the IBA and the different representational interests of the involved players (IBA, Kampnagel & HafenCity Universität) to initiate the project of a "Neighbourhoods University": a praxis-based laboratory for urban research and design.[10]

We, the group of initiators,[11] including teaching staff and students of a first seminar, started with some basic questions: What could university mean if it is situated in a neighbourhood? What is neighbourhood about? And what is the practice of being a neighbour? Not less and not more.

Take #1.1: Transforming

The project was launched claiming it would be a student project: designed, planned, built and used by students themselves. DIY, Hands on! Easy to say. But, how does one organize the work on a construction site, when there is limited scope for activities like this within the curricula of dense bachelor- and masters-programs? And, how to build for five years with an extremely limited budget and a wave of new students every term? How and where will we find support?

Take #1.1.1: CONSTRUCTION LOG1 [12]

"Actually, we want to chisel", Hannah and Kristina answer the question of which construction team they want to join. No problem. There is still

9 The winning team of the competition: Kate Bitz (Stadtplanung), Carsten Dittus (Stadtplanung), Maximilian Müller (Stadtplanung), Nicole Raddatz (Stadtplanung), Anton Reinig (Architektur)

10 The Universität der Nachbarschaften (UdN) was initiated by professors Christopher Dell, Bernd Kniess and Michael Koch, directed by Bernd Kniess and managed by Ben Becker (project development, construction, coordination and teaching) and Stefanie Gernert (project coordination and translation between various stakeholders, institutions and participants). Innumerable everyday life experts, academics, neighbours, students, guests and visitors were involved as participants, critics, contributors, and users.
Simultaneously we (Bernd Kniess and colleagues) developed and implemented the new interdisciplinary Master of Science program in Urban Design at the HCU, which is aimed not only at architects, planners, landscape architects and -planners, but also at geographers, sociologists, social- and cultural scientists, designers and others interested in researching and (re-)designing the city. See also: http://ud.hcu-hamburg.de

11 Christopher Dell, Bernd Kniess and Michael Koch, directed by Bernd Kniess and managed by Ben Becker (project development, construction, coordination and teaching) and Stefanie Gernert (project coordination and translation between various stakeholders, institutions and participants). Innumerable everyday life experts, academics, neighbours, students, guests and visitors were involved as participants, critics, contributors, users.

12 Author: Benjamin Becker from the UdN-construction diary 26.05.2010, Scribe: H. Verse; Temperature: 20 ° C / Weather: rainy; Construction team: Kristina, Hannah, Romano, Nico; Machines used: Bosch impact drill, demolition hammer, crowbar; Work accomplished: chiselling walls in the hallway to the apartment (Quantity: 2, Completed: 18.00), remove rubble, further chiselling with Mr. B.; Materials: -; Remarks: The berserker guys are free. Mrs. Lorenzen has twisted her ankles.

a sufficient number of walls that need to be demolished. In the small-scale spatial structure of the former health department, holes, corridors, openings have to be broken. [...] the idea is now to get more transparency and openness exposing the spatial potentials for the diverse uses only by means of dismantling. With that, the contractually arranged demolition of the building is constantly anticipated, the »construction« at the Neighbourhoods University in that sense actually means the permanent partial demolition of the actual stock while qualifying its space. [...] Later, at the place where all routes intersect, where cooking and discussions already take place, a soft light will fall through a translucent roof, on which the shadows of the trees will be drawn.

At this moment a lot of imagination is required to conceive this. The Hamburg rain falls incessantly through the open ceiling into the building and collects in muddy puddles on the concrete floor. From the southwest wing of the building the deafening hammering of a drill roars. Hannah and Kristina have long since joined the team of Nicolas, and the berserk guys, working without ceasing on taking down the wall of the long stretched hallway, which should give way to a workshop and exhibition area. They call this free workout.

Take #1.1.2: Transforming

With the first spatial interventions, a process of "programmed shrinkage" and "revaluation" was developed, and the building was slowly transformed with a minimal amount of money, a high amount of volunteer work and the up-cycling of used materials from other construction sites, into a usable working and living space for students.

The construction and installation of the "Intercultural Kitchen" was one of the first programmatic settings in the UdN. It was the Dutch urbanist and artist Ton Matton[13] leading a workshop to support the arrangements for

[13] See also: http://www.mattonoffice.org

the opening, who asked the students for the sources of the required kitchen utensils such as cutlery, crockery and pots, when the principle of the swap was being tested for the first time. The items needed were not acquired by purchase, but exchanged in the neighbourhood for tomato plants. This barter was not only successful in terms of getting the entire range of kitchen equipment needed, but also in terms of inviting the neighbours for the opening party. They were curious to see who needed their items where and what for.

Take #1.2: Get in Touch!

We, the initiators, started the project claiming it would be an open process. We thought it should come into being by itself – by its actors, their interests, the activities, which would come out of this. It was the UdN's challenge and research task to establish how this openness could be shaped constructively and what kind of relational planning could be derived from it.

It all started in July 2009 with the opening to the public and the consolidation of four projects: the repossession of the building as a "site office" and the first usage of the whole building with three performance-based formats: the "Intercultural Kitchen" and "MusiCooperation" were the first projects initiated and arranged by the students, and the performance project "Shivers" by "God's Entertainment" as an initial cooperation with our partner "Kampnagel Internationale Kulturfabrik".

Take #1.2.1: SHIVERS [14]

True to the motto “art as a pathogen” [God’s Entertainment] are up to mischief in the building. From motives of the film “Shivers” by David Cronenberg, the entertainers develop a contagious performance-journey into their own inner and other unknown worlds. In the run-up odours and rumours are spread, that reflect symbolically the legitimate fears of the residents about gentrification in Wilhelmsburg. God's Entertainment is unleashed on Wilhelmsburg: contacts are made, complicities are forged and a post for vaccination against Antiismus is instituted. Youth projects, nursing homes, and the direct neighbourhood, as well as other artists can and should be “infected”. Infected with the idea to revive the empty building again. This strategy is helpful as a kick-off for a series of performances in the building, since it breaks down boundaries in the mind. Without shield, with lots of charm and possibly a melon.

Take #1.3: Programming

We started the project by claiming the UdN as a construct, a superimposition of education, research and praxis. Together with the construction works, we started to create situations of (re)presentation, performance and mutual learning, to enable spaces of possibilities.

Figuring out the demands, learning about the potentials, and the challenges of the new location, we had to develop a special curriculum[15] to precisely address students from different bachelor and master programs according to their requirements.

The UdN became host to international workshops, seminars and research activities. Students and young professionals used the space for living

[14] The prelude was designed by the Vienna Performance Gang God's Entertainment. The parasitic journey into the interior environment. See: http://www.gods-entertainment.org/index.php/archiv/archiv-2009/hamburg-shivers-kampnagel-hamburg; accessed: 10.08.2013

[15] Addressing the specific demands of bachelor and master studies and different disciplines with tailored seminars and examination requirements, internship opportunities and schedules.

and working, focusing on urban and architectural topics related to Wilhelmsburg such as education, low-budget architecture, local embedded economy, re- and up-cycling of materials and social engagement in the neighbourhood.

With the conceptual term of "Ermöglichungsarchitektur" (enabling architecture), we attempted to reflect on these active processes, circumstances and their potentials.

Take #2: Performance, Breaking-Up the Boundaries

A core aspect within the project was interculturality. Interculturality as "doing culture", as a culture of the intermediate (cf. Terkessidis 2010), as a negotiation, a "being-with" (Nancy 2000), as "a verb" (Street 1993), rather than a noun. But, this also raised the question of what participation means? And how to understand intervention?

Slowly, the boundaries and borders between 'us' and 'Wilhelmsburg' were perforated. Perforated through our own practices of being a neighbour: by going out, hanging out, and performing research and practices of the everyday. We practiced not only a design-approach, which was radically based on the existing, we also worked on hybrid and embedded methods of research and design.

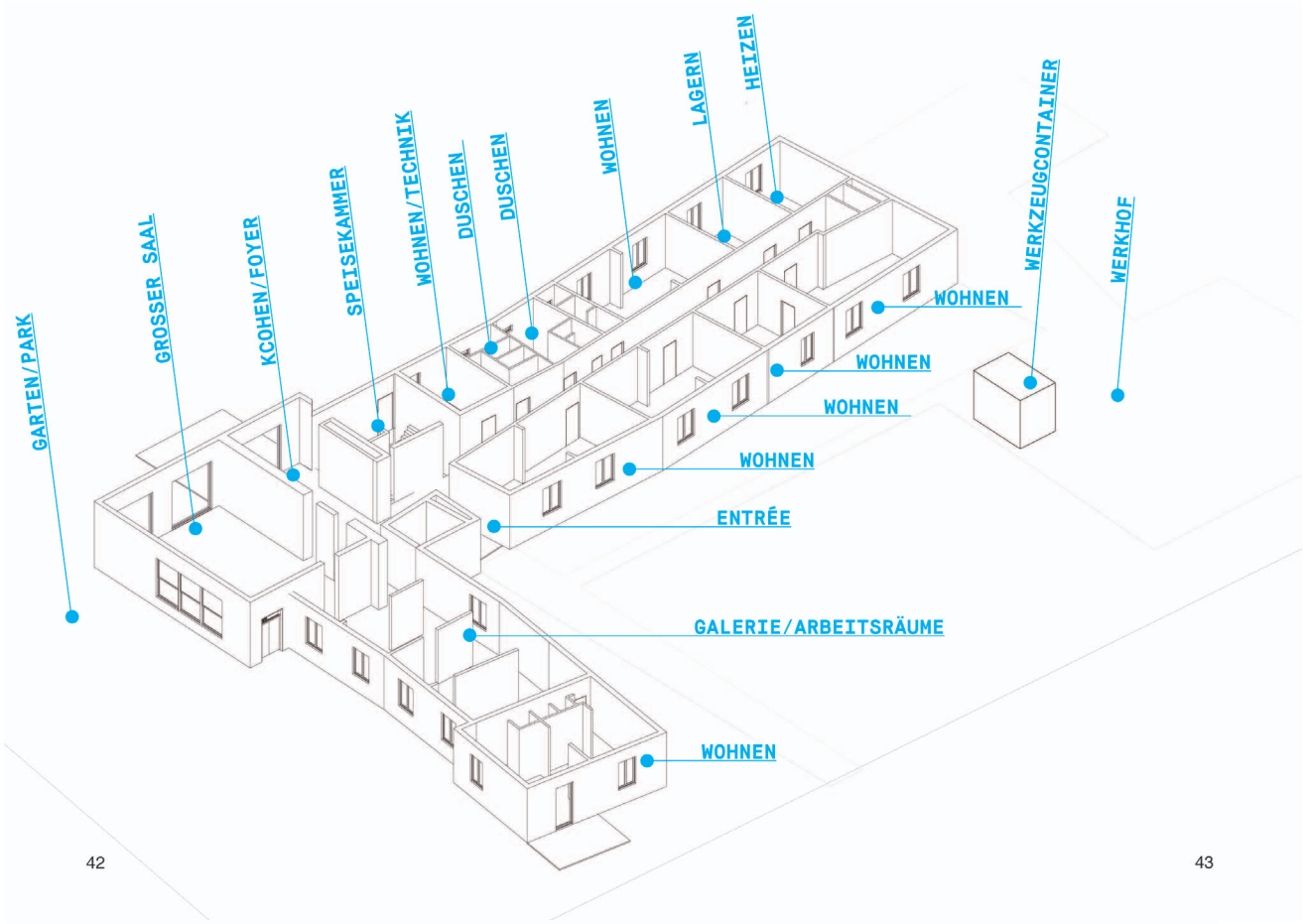
Rather than a way of researching about something, or design for someone, but working within the field and with the actors.

Due to their dynamic character, such processes do not proceed in a linear manner. But how, then, are we able to work with iterative and circular processes? How can we deal with the conflicting and diverging goals and interests? And, how is participation and intervention in these processes practiced?

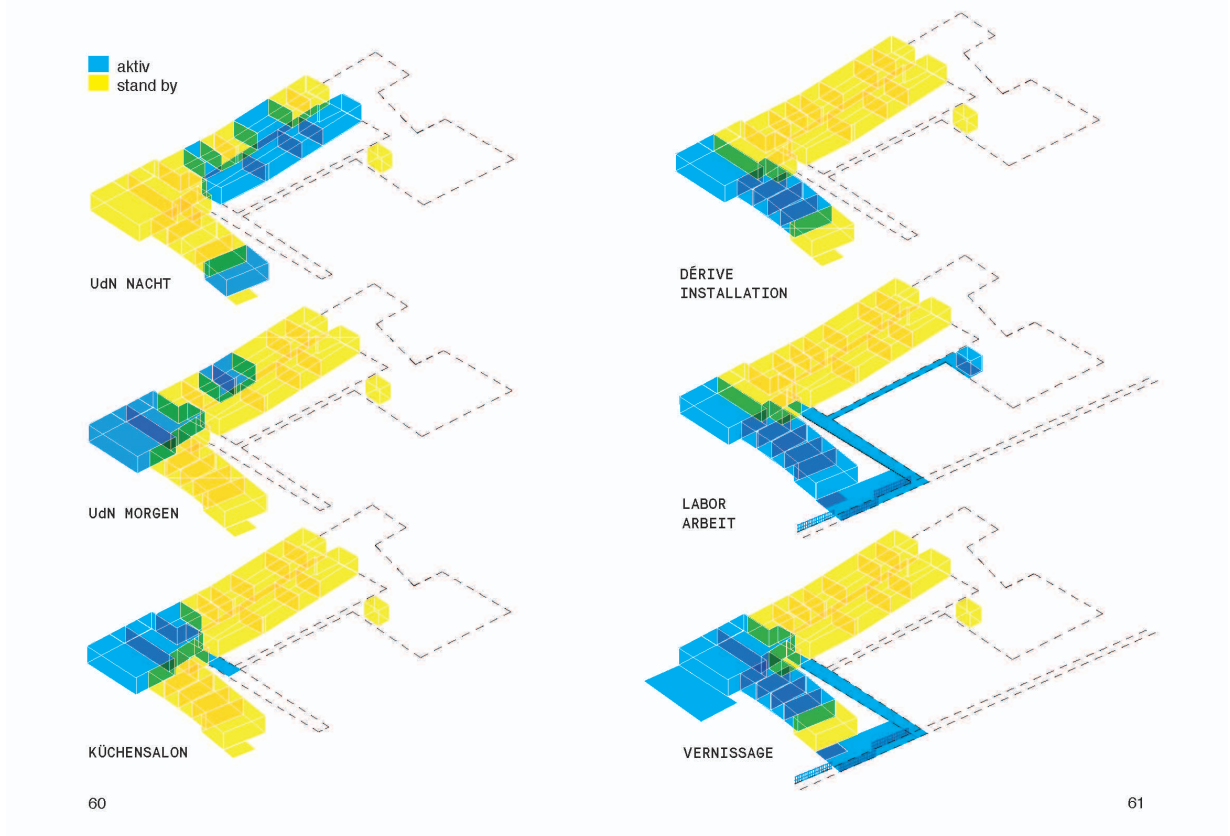
Take #2.1: Made in ... Elbinsel-Dérive [16]

We devised a workshop to test a transdisciplinary setting beyond the "creative city" on new economic, spatial and socio-cultural ideas to include the existing practical knowledge and the network of local "experts of everyday life" in the production processes of the present city. A broad range of methods, spanning from artistic research and intervention practices to ethnographic research tools where used and discussed. The laboratory's open "kitchen-salon" became a place of controversy, discussions, work, joy and revelling between strangers and neighbours.

16 "Made in... local practices of urban production" 2011 Workshop in cooperation with the Civic City program (ZHDK, Imke Plinta) and the Department of Urban Design at the HafenCity University Hamburg (HCU, Tabea Michaelis, Ben Pohl).


GARTEN/PARK
GROSSER SAAL
KCOHEN/FOYER
SPEISEKAMMER
WOHNEN/TECHNIK
DUSCHEN
DUSCHEN
WOHNEN
LAGERN
HEIZEN
WERKZEUGCONTAINER
WERKHOF
WOHNEN
WOHNEN
WOHNEN
WOHNEN
ENTRÉE
GALERIE/ARBEITSRÄUME
WOHNEN

42 43


aktiv
stand by
UdN NACHT
UdN MORGEN
KÜCHENSALON
DÉRIVE
INSTALLATION
LABOR
ARBEIT
VERNISSAGE

60 61

Take #2.1.1: Altes Land

We make connections with people through apples: we exchange apples for stories. Stories [...] served with home-distilled apple schnapps. Sweet. Spicy. Now we know their whole life story. It burns. [...] Hitchhiking back to UdN - by car? [...] We play tourist. [...] "Where does it go to Wilhelmsburg?" Silence. "From the Reeperbahn through the old Elbtunnel." Aha. So get down to the port area. It is loud. Hammering. Machine booming —the port. Hamburg's motor hums. Nobody's on the other side. We remain standing. Waiting, waiting for nothing. Blind alleys —many dead ends. Roads lead to nowhere. We're stuck. Apparently this belongs to the game. Method in the process. Deadlock. We need new rules of the game - if no one comes over here. We have lost ourselves - lost in the urban space. We are lost, are we? We hear the city, but there is none. Hello is anyone there?[17]

Take #2.2: The Game with Rules and Regulators – Parameter-Shift[18]

During the World Cup 2010 in South Africa, the questions our students were facing concerned the basic principles and rules of soccer. What are the components of a game? If one component changes completely, what else has to be changed so that it will still be a good soccer match?

Take #2.2.1: The football tournament

The soccer tournament was essentially a series of diagrams that provoked the participating neighbours and students to think about soccer in a different way, while also sparking them to come together through the universal language of the game. The diagrams allowed the fields to become new interstitial spaces that were neutral, yet very much physically part of the Wilhelmsburg landscape. Many may think that the tournament could not be considered design because it did not have a concrete and tangible product. However, the soccer tournament's minimal physical product allowed for the diagram and social purpose of the design not to lose any meaning along the way, as often happens when incorporated into large physical infrastructure. The minimally constructed product facilitated the users to interact directly with the essence of the design solution: the participants consciously played out the diagrams within their urban landscape. Lastly, the lack of a constructed product allowed the solution to be local and perpetual. These new fields and rules were comical, fun and visually striking in order to attract attention and bring together the widespread and diverse Wilhelmsburg community with something that was loved and understood by all: Football.[19]

[17] Author: Tabea Michaelis based on comments and notes of the "Made in ..." workshop participants 2011 at UdN.

[18] A Seminar in cooperation with the artist Jan Holtmann and the Art&SportsClub Wilhelmsburg. 2010.

[19] Author: Meghan McAllister. This is an extract of the Reflection Paper written by Meghan McAllister. She studied Growth & Structure of Cities at the Haverford College nearby Philadelphia. Meghan McAllister took part at various projects at the curriculum of the UdN as an exchange student during the summer of 2010.

Take #2.3: Hang On![20]

As a free leisure opportunity for kids during their summer holidays, the "UdN summer camp" addresses children from the neighbourhood. For a period of two weeks it means rolling up your sleeves, getting ideas, sawing, hammering, drilling, crafting, knitting, winding, climbing, cooking and having fun. In a playful way children and students together learn to deal with different materials while they are testing them hands-on.

The building process is similar to a 'real' construction site. In a first step, children have to collect information about the imagined clients, their characters, circumstances of life and special likes as inputs for their design. It is in this playful way that shape is derived from an experimental working process incorporating the children´s motion sequences as well as knowledge from tests with recycled and contextually foreign materials.

Take #2.3.1:

"From plastic foil one makes bags, not houses", the eleven-year old Aisha had objected with a shake of her head at the first day of the summer camp. In search of suitable building materials they had just found a big

20 The "Treehouse" projects, which ran between 2010 and 2013, asked how children can participate directly in the planning and design processes in their neighbourhood through interventions. The "Treehouse-Seminar" was part of a series named "intercultural practice", which aims to encourage students to focus on those areas and situations in which culture introduces "symbolic equilibriums, compensatory contracts and more or less permanent compromises" (de Certeau). Seminar-concept: Bernd Kniess, Benjamin Becker, Philipp Löper

pile of tarpaulins in the attic. Cut into long strips, it seems like the perfect material for knitting a resilient tissue. But: How to knit a tree house with children? With a Knitting Jenny. However, no ordinary one for wool stockings, but an XXL-version of it, with a diameter of six feet. Once one of those had been built, a gigantic, endless mesh tube of plastic could be produced with a flick of a wrist. It is so simple, even a child can master it quickly.

On the final day of the summer camp Alberta Rachnea, the spider woman, wearing a black morphsuit and pink strainer eyes, arrives at the UdN to move into her silkmoth treehouse. By then, Aisha's legitimate discontent is long forgotten. Every day now children hang out in the tress, playing in their tree houses – if asked who were the designers that built them, almost all of them will tell you the names of the kids involved.[21]

[21] Author: Benjamin Becker, 2013 “Hang On!”

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Take #2.4: I am waiting for... [22]

[22] Author: Tabea Michaelis Team: Sarah Assel, Tabea Michaelis, Vanessa Weber Seminar Urban Territories II: Katja Heineke, Katrin Klitzke Seminar Topic: Intervention and Participation

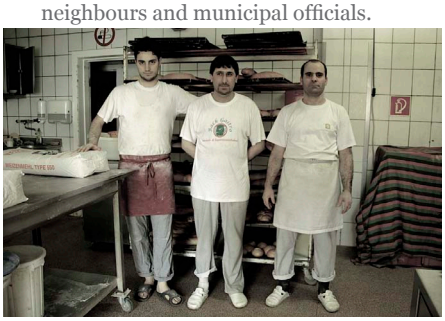
During our first joint Dérive on the Elbe Island, it did not take long for us to observe that many actors or “actants” (Latour) were waiting, and this was being expressed in very different ways. The entire island was apparently in a permanent waiting queue. "But what are they waiting for ...?" A starting point to begin the research. An obvious setting for our project seemed a place of the everyday waiting - the bus stop. "I am waiting for ..." we translated the sentence into the local languages spoken and written on coloured post-its. We experienced different reactions and moments immediately upon hanging up the post-its at the bus stop. Also later we observed the reactions when we softly mingled as “participating observers” amongst those waiting. The four parameters post-it, the sentence, “I am waiting for ...” finally in almost 20 languages, and the pen, we consider as supportive "tools", that brought our actions in variable sequences. There was no script in advance. Rather the actions and reactions of the various actors are the "raw material" with which we work in a situational way. There were many options to participate in the game and to direct the intervention in an unexpected direction. The bus timetable became a basic rhythm for our performance. Within a few seconds, the bus stop emptied, only to fill up again. As a result, we got into contact with people – the length of this contact depending on when the next bus arrived. People of different ages or origins spoke to us spontaneously and curiously. In some situations, the language formed an insurmountable barrier, but in others we listened to personal stories and voices. In the course of our artistic intervention, this easily ludic and direct interaction appeared very significant to us. The answers to our question (Nintendo, my mother, Hope, Love, my bed, etc.) reflected the local sentiments. [...] The post-its then eventually disappeared slowly, silently and without a trace of their ephemeral nature.

Why should one care about such a shack and its final five years? Bernd Kniess & Ben Pohl

[23] The Wilhelmsburg orchestra was founded in 2010 by the jazz musician, composer and improvisation theorist Christopher Dell – conceived as a research orchestra within the curriculum of the UdN. The goal is to practice improvisation – not to perform a preconceived plan. Improvisation does not mean working with incapability but rather the constructive approach to disorderliness as a collaborative transgression of a plan (cf. Dell 2011). Seminar: Bernd Kniess, Sebastian Bührig

[24] Author: Sebastian Bührig WIO 2012

[25] The Seminar "Working Worlds – Exploring Wilhelmsburg" was part of a series of seminars named "intercultural practice", which aimed to encourage students to focus on those areas and situations in which culture introduces "symbolic equilibriums, compensatory contracts and more or less permanent compromises" (de Certeau). Seminar-concept: Bernd Kniess, Ben Pohl with support from Katja Heinecke who was running the first "Explore Wilhelmsburg" workshop in 2009 together with Ellen Fiedelmeier. In this particular one-week videographic workshop, a team of nine students from a range of disciplines explored the "Working Worlds" of Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg. The explorations resulted in a multifaceted insight into the local working worlds, provoking reflexive expressions on the notion of "work and labour" and making the worlds of work visible and audible to an audience of neighbours and municipal officials.



Take #2.5: Wilhelmsburg Orchestra (WIO)[23]

Just before Christmas the Wilhelmsburg Orchestra sat comfortably together in a pub in the Reiherstieg district, passing in review the last concerts. Also Egon from Kirchdorf, our long-time companion, was there. That he was already longer part of the orchestra than all other members present there, aroused the curiosity of a student: "Hey Egon, how did you get to actually play along in the WIO? And what is it like for you, that we as researching musicians or musical researchers also do research on someone like you?" Egon smiled and said: "Very simple. I like to make music, I like to make music with people who are relaxed because I think it should be fun and I have a lot of fun to play with the WIO. In addition, I am very interested how it sounds when people as you improvise regularly with each other. Because I'm a trained musician and music therapist - so I'd rather say, I am researching you!"[24]

Take #2.6: Working Worlds – Exploring Wilhelmsburg. A performative videographic approach[25]

Unnoticed by Western politics favouring the "knowledge economy", the less attention-grabbing changes in the working world seem to have fallen out of focus. Yet these unperceived, unattractive or migrant worlds of work are highly embedded in the urban (cf. Sassen).. But if the dynamics are mostly unpredictable, and communities are short of money, complex qualitative research methods are very unlikely to be applied in daily design practice. This raises the demand for new methods of dealing with communication, participation, research and design in practical terms. Does videography have a specific potential to fulfil aspects of this demand? Can videography be seen as a performative method of intercultural practice, mutual participation and production of shared meaning?

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Take #2.7: From the Kiosk to the Open Water-Hole[28]

Drifting around the northern part of Wilhelmsburg, crossing again and again the Reiherstieg district. We are getting thirsty and with it, curious. An end-of-work-beer, or two at the kiosk. [...] At the kiosk, we pause. Something we like about it arouses our curiosity. We overhear a dispute about the place and what to call it. Is it kiosk or refreshment stand? What is the difference? We write emails, make an appointment, meet an expert. The dispute interests us less than the everyday of - and the phenomenon - kiosk. Kiosk, a name for what? We research, read and explore the story. Tents of nomads, garden living room, water-cottage and drinking halls. An evolution of practices, power and typologies. Curiosity was driving us and we even pay for it. We hang around with those who hang out there, ask questions and get asked, observe and are observed mutually. Before we are aware, we are part of the kiosk life, as "participant observers". We write, conduct interviews, buy water and beer and begin to arrange the photos, interviews and observation notes.

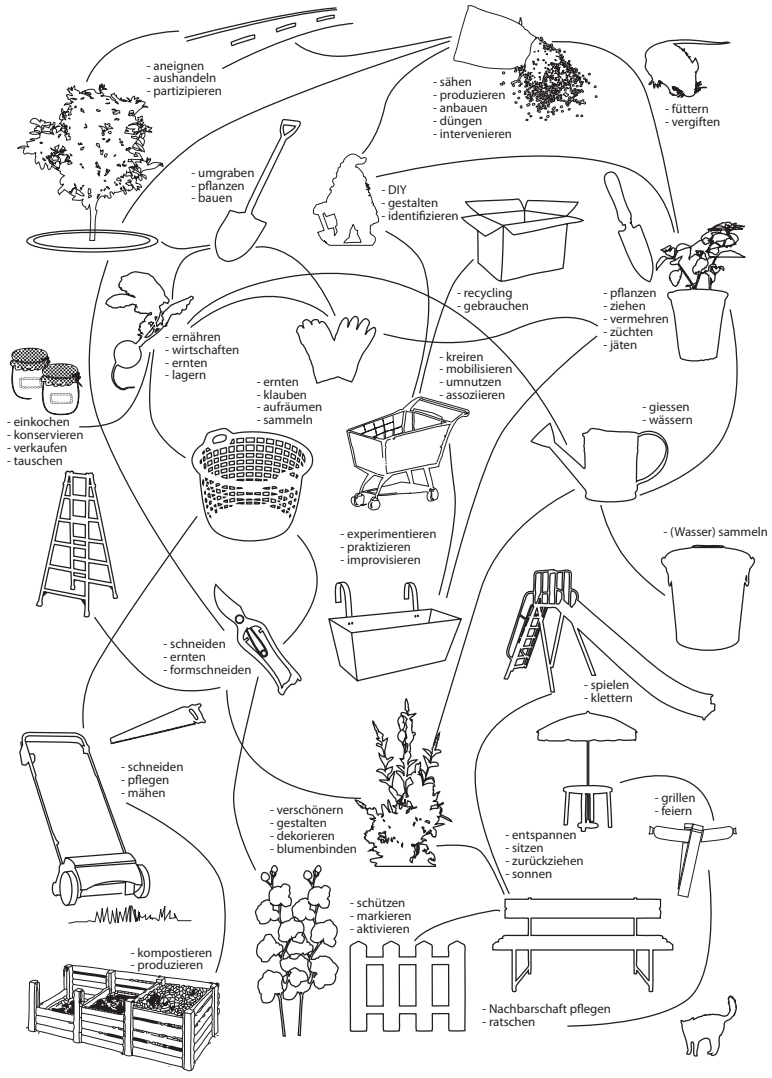
Take #3: The Practice of Living

Modernity once has been inscribed into urban life to organise the city. Although its aim and approach has undergone many changes, some of the main paradigms still remain. But does this manner in which the process of design and planning is organised still fit the challenges we are facing in the 21th century? And, if not, how do we define the relation of functions and practices anew? How to deal with new demographic constellations, mobility and changes in labour and the working worlds?

If it is claimed, that the city is collectively produced by its inhabitants, and if the urban is formulated through a broad variety of practices of the

28 Research on the kiosk-culture of Wilhelmsburg. Team: Ben Pohl, Hans Vollmer et. al. "Das kommende Fest – vom Kiosk zur offenen Wasserstelle" Seminar Urban Territories II: Katja Heinecke, Katrin Klitzke Seminar Topic: Participation and Intervention.

everyday, wouldn't it then – in order to professionalize – be essential for all disciplines concerned with the urban to research these processes and rehearse its practices? Even exploring the dimension that spans between the public, the common and the private anew?



21

Take #3.1: A Paradise-Garden on Axis[27]

The UdN as a research station became the temporary home and thus also a place of washing, sleeping, cooking. The kitchen and stove form the centre of UdN. But what is a kitchen without a garden? A piece of cultivated area, a 'Hortus Conclusus' between the unruly thickets of brambles, rocks, pears, field maple, wild daffodils, elderberry bushes and borders of stinging nettles. Where can I find a glade here ever! Impossible. According to Michel Foucault, the garden is the oldest example of a "heterotopia of contradictory locations". With and through the garden we enter our other (un) familiar places and move through other times round. We reflect

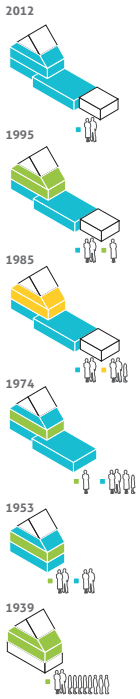
27 Author: Tabea Michaelis

ourselves in the garden. In this we see ourselves both in the real and unreal in one place. We walk between the times, between the cultures. It seems fantastic, weightless - infinite. We sail. The garden is this “smallest parcel of the world and at the same time it is the whole world. (...) The garden is a carpet onto which the whole world appears in symbolic perfection, and the carpet is to some extent the in space versatile garden.”[28] We fly. The garden travels with us. A paradise-garden on axis. The garden as a companion. The garden, which immediately moves into the house where it waits patiently next to the cooking pot on its mission. A house-garden – a garden-house.

[28] Michel Foucault, Des espaces autres. Empan, no54(2) 2004, pp.12–19.

Take #3.2: Next living – House and life cycles in Alt-Kirchdorf[29]

[29] Third semester urban research and design project UDP3 about building transformation practices in the single family home neighbourhood of Alt-Kirchdorf. Authors: Aron Bohmann, Charlotte Herbst, Katrin Hovy Seminar: Bernd Kniess, Anke Hagemann et. al.



The Meier family lived in cramped conditions with their eight children in the 50m2 house built in the late 1930s. After the destruction of the house in WWII, the family lived in a temporary home built by Mary's father in the garden for five years. In 1950 the destroyed house is rebuilt in almost the same design. In 1953 Helmut and Maria Meier marry, one year later their first daughter Martina is born. At this time, they live on the top floor of the rebuilt house, while their mother lives on the ground floor. When Helmut and Maria Meier think about moving out, some time after the Great Flood in 1962, Maria's mother persuades them to stay, and the house is overwritten to the daughter Mary.

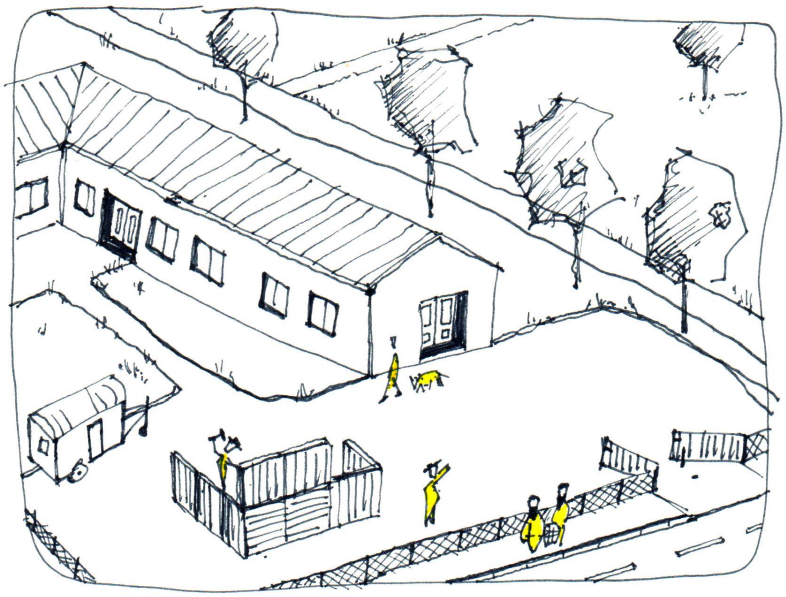
Then, a large-scale conversion takes place in 1974. The rough work is made by professional builders, but all interior work is carried out by Helmut Meier himself. After her mother's death, the entire original house is being renovated and another kitchen is built. Now there are two completely independent units in the same house – one downstairs, one upstairs – only the entrance is shared. First, their 2nd daughter Simone lives on the upper floors with her husband. After she moves out, the Meier’s granddaughter Simona moves in for a short time. Today, the Helmut and Maria live alone in the house for the first time. But if there is a need, the grandchildren can stay on the upper floors, and, at family gatherings, the upper rooms become the playroom for the great-grandchildren.

Take #3.3: We´ll see[30]

[30] Author: Hans Vollmer, Long-time inhabitant of the UdN

It is midday Friday and we are constructing a Gecekondu with EURO pallets. Two men with long black beards and even longer robes are coming along the street, carrying a plastic box. They stop at the fence, wondering what kind of a building this is. It is the UdN they are wondering about as our pallet house is not yet identifiable as a building at this moment. [...]. “May we have a look?” asks one of the two.

[...] One of them is very surprised, when we tell them that we live here. “Looks better than I thought,” says the other. “It still needs to be painted, no?” asks one of the two as we stand in the kitchen, and adds: “You could make it really nice here!”



Retake #3.4: An Orchid Place[31]

[31] Author: Monika Alovjanovic, doctoral candidate in »Urban Metamorphoses«. Personal Reflections.

I have been told that this place used to be something else. It used to have a function, a structure, a social background. Once you were in there, a certain norm of behaviour had to be respected. [...] It used to impose order, maintain silence and demand light. That place used to mark the street; it used to be a destination, a point of meeting, or a point of departure. That place used to be part of a human’s life; a dark spot in someone´s personal history; or an inevitable station in someone's journey.

And then this place stopped “to be” and started “to become”. The place lost its function, its structure was disrupted, the background vanished. There was no one to adjust its behaviour to this place; no one there for switching lights on or off, no one for pulling down the window blinds. Even the silence sounded differently. It was no one´s destination, neither point for meeting nor for departure.

As a place with an outdated function and rundown structure, it became only an endless possibility. It allowed for an “in-between” spatial use. Suddenly without a meaning, it opened a door for reinterpretation, reuse, re-adaptation and social replay. It became UdN—the way I got to know it. The first questions I asked when I entered this liminal and “soon-to-be place” were: “What is this place? A dormitory? A squat? A club? A

cantina?" After some time I understood that it is nothing of this and, at the same time, all of this together. It is a non-place and an über-place; physically vacant and spiritually replete with meaning. It is extremely uncomfortable, as it is cold and modestly arranged, but surprisingly pleasant to spend your time in. You can eat, think, talk, sleep here. You can come inside, or stay outside—whatever, no borders to cross over. This place needs no improvement or cleaning. It only needs to be nurtured.

Take #3.5: "Terrain des hôtes" – hosts and guests at the same place

> L'hôte, host and guest in one word, gives and receives, offers and agrees, is host and stranger.[32]

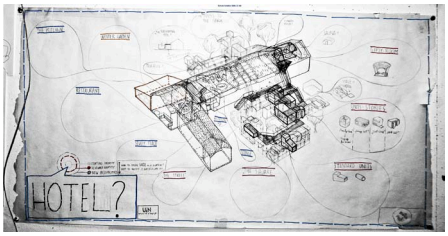
Also we at the UdN are guest, host and stranger at the same time and place. A place we do not dominate permanently, since we do not "own" it. Also we, in the role of "l'hôte" have to negotiate the rules of what is allowed and what has to be excluded in always new contracts. With our roommates, with guests who are with us, with the neighbours or the children of the neighbourhood that ensnare the house.

In our own daily routine even in the UdN we often fail. If already the refrigerator becomes a contested territory of ownership and appropriation conflicts, it turns out, that we still slip quickly into the depths of existing hegemonic structures and that we miss alternative cultural patterns of action to deal with the common oeuvre. This simple order of "my and your" territory, of "established and outsiders"[33] we want to oppose the oscillating figure of the "l'hôte" as Michel Serres describes him. But this needs plenty of rehearsal loops, takes and iterations to bring such a "Terrain des hôtes" of hosts and guests at the same place to life.[34]

Take #4: Maximum Superimposition: UdN&Hotel

Not only in Wilhelmsburg, questions of dwelling and living, of affordable housing, work and labour in our cities become a central topic. Composed of 158 different nationalities, and a high fluctuation of "working tourists" from all over the world, parts of the island can be seen as a growing "horizontal quasi hotel".

With the "Hotel" project, we, the teachers, ask the question of functions and living again. What is the minimum amount of private space that one needs? Which functions of living and being active can commonly be shared? How to reach a maximum quality of luxury with a minimum amount of resources spent?



32 Michel Serres, Der Parasit. 1. (edition. Suhrkamp 1987) p.15. Our translation.

33 Elias, Norbert, Michael Schröder, and John L Scotson, Etablierte und Außenseiter. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2002). The quote refers to the title and general topic of the book.

34 Author: Ben Pohl, Personal reflections of being inhabitant

All of these questions are taken as methodical questions and metaphors for the superimposition of functions and to overcome their separation. It is about exploring even what it means to self-build a hotel out of the demands and practices of living and being active.

At the same time, the project also sought to identify sustainable options for the future of the property, which we had to leave by the end of 2013. “Hotel?Wilhelmsburg” therefore acted as a vehicle for an applied research and redesign approach, with which we tried to maximize the overlapping hybrid networks of university, community, local economies and guests to open the UdN as a discursive space, for the negotiation of current, site-specific and global issues of urban development and transformation processes.

A series of workshops[35] spanning from March until July 2013 left a situationist “Exquisite corpse” in the yard of the UdN, reminding of Yona Friedman’s “Ville Spatiale” remixed with Constant Nieuwenhuy’s “New Babylon” and Cedric Price’s educational model in his “Potteries Thinkbelt” project. Our approach was to foster not only the educational practice, but also address place making and hospitality aspects. Students, academics and local stakeholders were working within cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural constellations on three key issues: firstly on the development of operating systems, secondly on a communication model with regard to aspects of participation and sharing, and, finally, the architectural translation into a 1:1 model.

Keeping in mind the experimental arrangement and interest in “the praxis of living” we sought to learn from these kind of processes for future models of urban living.

35 Over the course of all together eight weeks, each week the workshop was attended and supervised by a guest. These included architects and artists Ton Matton (Wendorf), Florian Tampe (Hamburg), Alexander Römer (Paris) and Martin Kaltwasser (Berlin), Peter Fatinger (Wien), Benjamin Förster-Baldenius (Berlin), Andrea Hofmann (Berlin).

Open-End Iterations

Even without going into details of the changes that most European cities have to contend with, it is becoming clear that the task is no any longer to design but rather to actively redesign our global and local interdependencies. Changing economic conditions affect our practices of work as well as the relations between work and dwelling which we have to deal with professionally as urban designers. This means that we have to seek new modes and models of economy, inter-culturality, participation, learning and dwelling based on the existing. But this shift of focus also raises questions about how to enable young researchers and designers to develop their skills and methods.

For a period of five years, the UdN became part of the academic curricula of the HCU. It allowed students of architecture, urban design and planning to participate actively on the construction-site, in the refurbishment of the building, and to work on the programming of its use. The teaching formats, which included lectures, project work, workshops, seminars, conferences summer schools and many more, encouraged interdisciplinary work and active engagement with members and groups of the surrounding neighbourhood. It was the UdN's main aim to engage with current questions of urban research, the contemporary and future needs of an urban society and to link these to its teaching activities.

From the outset, we believed (and still believe) that these global questions of interdependencies will have to be raised on the level of the neighbourhood with an eye-level perspective, identifying, designing and broadening possibilities for a conscious and active co-design of the circumstances we are living in. It was therefore integral to all of UdN's activities to improve social integration and to activate autonomous behaviour within our field of operation. Seminars taught in the context of the UdN made students reflect on the terms of participation and intervention and asked them to develop small-scale projects (scale 1:1) and to establish interactive platforms for communication and exchange.

As educators, we were trying to build what Denzin is calling "a safe space where students are willing to take risks, to move back and forth between the personal and the political, the biographical and the historical. They perform painful personal experiences. [...] Under this framework students teach one another. [...] This is performance-centered pedagogy, the use of performance as a method of investigation, as a way of doing ethnography, and as a method of understanding."[36]

[36] Norman K. Denzin, The Qualitative Manifesto: A Call To Arms (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2010)

Since sustainable urban re-developments are highly complex and require the involvement of a range of different disciplines and stakeholders, one of the most urgent issues is communication, trust, mutual respect and recognition. Hence a common language and shared meanings, between the "experts of the everyday", the inhabitants, as well as the various disciplines related to urban planning, design and architecture is needed.

It is a long way to come up with this common trans- and interdisciplinary language, and a performative and experimental aspect is required to create and translate shared meaning between different languages through common practice. This attempt remains – as we see it – an open-end procedure of perpetually new iterations, loops and takes, becoming essential for all intercultural, trans- and interdisciplinary attempts in order to overcome the existing disciplinary blind-spots.

Bibliography:

Certeau, Michel de, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 2011)

Denzin, Norman K., *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century* (Sage, 1997)

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Sage, 2005)

Denzin, Norman K., T*he qualitative manifesto: a call to arms* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Left Coast Press, 2010)

Dell, Christopher, *Replaycity: Improvisation als urbane Praxis* (Berlin: Jovis, 2011)

Elias, Norbert, Michael Schröder, and John L Scotson, *Etablierte und Außenseiter* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002)

Foucault, Michel, *Des espaces autres*. Empan, no54(2), 2004, pp.12–19.

Nancy, Jean-Luc, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford University Press, 2000)

Sassen, Saskia, *Urban Manufacturing: Economy, Space and Politics in Today's Cities*. Paper presented at the DSSW-Konferenz "Erfolgreiche Innenstädte. Handeln - Koordinieren - Integrieren", (Berlin, 2006)

Serres, Michel, *Der Parasit*. 1. edition. (Suhrkamp, 1987)

Serres, Michel, *The Five Senses: a Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*. (Continuum, 2008)

Street, Brian, 'Culture Is a Verb: Anthropological Aspects of Language and Cultural Process'. *Language and Culture* 1993: 23–43.

Terkessidis, Mark, *Interkultur* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010)

ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Deleuze's Fold as Urban Strategy

Francesco Sebregondi

This essay revisits the notion of the urban void as framed in architectural theory of the past decades, in an attempt to highlight the strategic role played by voids in enabling contemporary processes of urban regeneration. The example of the evacuated Heygate estate in South London is used to formulate a critique of a conception of such urban voids as strictly outside the city and its productive structures. Instead, the figure of the "fold", as articulated by Deleuze, is proposed as a more accurate conceptual framework to describe the relation of urban voids to the city – an outside within, which transforms it from the inside. While unpacking the procedures by which urban voids are currently used as support structures to speculative forms of urban development, the essay also asks whether these same voids may ground the construction of alternative urban futures.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Introduction

As a sort of hushed refrain within urban theory, spaces that are primarily defined by their exteriority to a prevailing urban frame have made intermittent appearances in the writings on modern cities. A far-from-exhaustive list could include the following three examples.

In the early sixties, the Belgian section of the Situationist International wrote about 'voids': fragments of the city that needed to be liberated from their occupation by the capitalist/spectacular urban order.[1] Only from these voids could construction start, and authentic urbanism emerge. In the Situationists' perspective, such spaces outside of the city's plan did not pre-exist their discovery, but had to be constructed, as a form of resistance against the processes of massive urbanisation that were unfolding at the time. Thirty years laters, spaces with similar characteristics appear again: in Hakim Bey's pamphlet T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, a tactical manual for creating places that elude established forms of control and that exist within the cracks of the urban and social order;[2] and most notably in the field of architecture, in the essay 'Terrains Vagues' by Solà-Morales, a much-quoted study of these vacant and indeterminate places which seem to sprout within the urban fabric and yet 'exist outside the city's effective circuits and productive structures.' [3]

The terms "void", "T.A.Z", or "terrain vague" certainly don't mean the same thing. Nonetheless, one can identify some common traits in the concepts that they respectively sketch, which we will try to unpack here. On the one hand, such spaces all appear to enclose a certain political potential, in as much as the absence which lies at their core — of an established order of things — expands the field of the possible they are embedded in. On the other hand – and this point will be the focus of the discussion in the present essay – these spaces are described as radically separated from the city's inside. Running throughout the three pieces of writing where they appear is the idea that such clear-cut separation does not only form the defining character of such spaces, but also their condition of existence. 'They are foreign to the urban system, mentally exterior in the physical interior of the city, its negative image, as much a critique as a possible alternative', writes Solà-Morales. [4]

Considering that their vagueness is an essential part of their character, the task of producing a precise and distinct definition for each of these spaces is a difficult one – and perhaps not the most urgent. Rather than putting the emphasis on what they are, we will focus here on what they do, on how they work; thereby starting from the assumption of a certain commonality among such urban forms of exteriority, in order to ask a series of questions. First, can the architect engage with these spaces, he or she who is essentially on the side of order, whose accepted social role is that of ordering space? If indeterminacy and openness are fundamental

1 Kotany, A. / Vaneigem, R. 'Elementary Program of the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism' (Point 6. 'The Landing' Translated by K. Knabb) in *Internationale Situationniste* #6 (1961).

2 Bey, H. *The Temporary Autonomous Zone* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1991)

3 De Solà-Morales, I. 'Terrain Vague' in C Davidson (Ed) *AnyPlace*, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1995).

4 Ibid

characters of such spaces, can the architect keep from destroying them with programs and closures?[5] And secondly, whether or not the architect can take part in the process, where and how do such spaces acquire their political relevance in material terms? Can such forms of exteriority be put to work for transformative purposes? How to shift from the appeal and inspiration they arouse in theoretical writings, to a practice of change that would be grounded there?

The hypothesis to be tested here is the following: if there is any transformative potential to be activated within such spaces, one first needs to rethink their relation to the city; to move away from a conception of strict exteriority, and to focus on understanding the actual embedding of such spaces within contemporary urban processes. Through the case study of the urban regeneration of the Elephant and Castle area in South London, this essay will attempt to do three things. Firstly, it will discuss the role played by the evacuated Heygate estate, centrally located in the area considered, within the broader process of urban regeneration. In doing so, it will formulate a critique of the conceptual heritage left in architectural theory by Solà-Morales' 'Terrains Vagues' essay by mobilizing Deleuze's notion of the 'fold'. Going beyond the categorical divide between the city's interior and exterior, it will be argued that the 'fold' describes in more accurate terms the form of exteriority that urban voids embody within contemporary processes of urban production. Secondly, once described the folding operations that were deployed to produce an urban void in the Heygate estate, and how this void was made into a crucial support of the ongoing regeneration, the essay will discuss the possibility of subversion of such voids, through the example of an intervention on the façade of the Heygate initiated by the author. Finally, as a response to the notion of urban blind spots that first triggered it, [6] the essay will reflect upon the question of the visibility of such folded urban voids – to be more precise, on what is at stake in their invisibility – and recount an peculiar response to the abovementioned intervention.

Folding: beyond the interior/exterior divide

Built in the early seventies, the Heygate was a housing complex of 1260 flats, now entirely evacuated and partly demolished. Today it is essentially a massive void, a fenced-off one, standing in the middle of the £1.5bn regeneration scheme of the Elephant and Castle area. The process of evacuation started in 2007, while the demolition of the Heygate's main blocks only started in February 2014, and is expected to be completed in 2015. Given this peculiar spatial and temporal configuration – a seven-years old void at the heart of one of the largest regeneration scheme in Europe – it seems pertinent to question the role of this void in the urban changes surrounding it. [7]

5 A question that Solà-Morales also asks in his 'Terrain Vague' essay, and to which we will return later by trying to provide a different answer from that which he sketches in his conclusion. Ibid., pp.122-123.

6 The present essay is a revised and expanded version of a paper given at the "Urban Blind Spots" symposium, at the School of Architecture, University of Sheffield, 14 November 2012

7 Having already discussed this situation in detail in some previous writings, I will here only summarise its key aspects that are relevant to the focus of the present essay. See Sebregondi, F. *The Event of Void* (London: self-published, 2011); and Sebregondi, F. (2012) 'Notes on the Potential of Void. The case of the evacuated Heygate estate' in *City* Vol.16, No. 3 (June 2012).

Fig. 1. The evacuated Heygate estate (left) and the newly completed Strata tower (right), Elephant and Castle, London, 28 October 2011. Author's own photograph.

A first element that stands out when undertaking research around the Heygate estate is its unprecedented media presence. As the focus of a massive regeneration in Central London, it has attracted much news coverage and documentary analysis. Yet it is in fictional media that it was featured the most. The early evacuation of the estate in 2007 – five years before the first planning documents outlining the scheme that would replace it were submitted – was immediately accompanied by its transformation into a hyperactive filming location. At least 76 films were shot there between 2007 and 2010, and many more since. Ranging from D.I.Y. music videos to blockbuster movies such as Michael Caine's Harry Brown (2009) or Brad Pitt's World War Z (2013), the large majority of them employ the Heygate to depict the timeworn cliché of the inner-city concrete jungle. [8] Arguably, this overproduction of images made possible by the emptiness of the place has been actively sustaining the discourse behind the regeneration of the area, by projecting into the city an image of the council estate as a depraved, dysfunctional, and outdated place. Which now must be replaced.

There is also a material side to this media exploitation of the Heygate's void. A series of defensive measures were taken by the developer and the Council to keep the curious, or the squatters, away from the estate. The whole perimeter of the Heygate is delimited by miles of hoardings, which reinforce the enclosure effect already induced by the massive housing blocks on the boundary of the site. Together, they start working as a dyke, which keeps the city out, retains some empty space available for future development, and lets the pressure of the market rise on its edges. The entire site shall be cut out from the city, inaccessible, invisible – except from a certain distance.

8 Most of the information about the use of the Heygate as a filming location was obtained by the author following the submission of a Freedom of Information request (n. 160170) to Southwark Council on 6 July 2011. Responses and details about the films shot there were received on 11 August 2011.

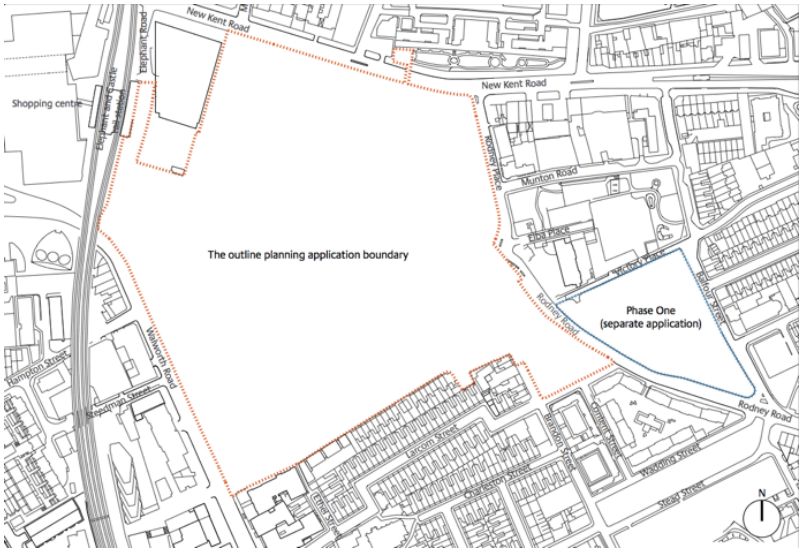


Fig. 2. Folding and inner void. 'Plan showing application boundaries'. Extract from Lend Lease/Southwark Council's 'Transforming the Heygate' public campaign (Part 1 - Planning and Process).

All around the Heygate, the empty and decaying blocks (which only now start to be demolished) compose a particular urban landscape: one that juxtaposes the dereliction of the past with the shiny new developments that are mushrooming in the area. The architectural imperative of the new development seems to be that of showing a radical contrast of appearance with the council estate's ruined aesthetics—as developed through films and photographs, just as materially staged on site. This way, regardless of the quality in absolute terms of what is being built, its relative, perceived value is pushed to an extreme. A concrete example of landscape 'as an instrument of cultural power':[9] through this mise-en-scène a clearly intelligible discourse is diffused from the Heygate to the city, both in images and locally. Namely: council housing has failed, urban renewal is now on his way – and you'd better strive to be part of it.

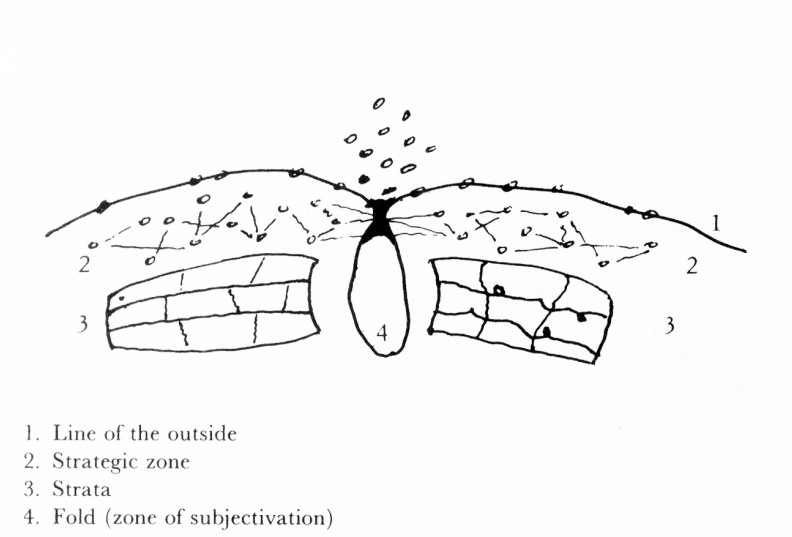
One could say that landscape displays as much as it hides, and in that sense, the expression blind spot is pertinent to describe the inside of the evacuated housing complex as it stood for nearly seven years. Because of a few remaining residents – the last having been forcefully evicted in December 2013 – the central open space behind the hoardings was still accessible, albeit by tortuous paths. What one could find there was a calm and silent place, dozens of mature plane trees, and a series of more or less marginal activities going on. Teenagers are of course among the first to discover such places of lower urban control, and it didn't take long before the Heygate's void was turned it into a hot spot of BMX, parkour, graffiti, or casual hangout in South London. Other activities taking place there comprised 'guerilla gardening' in the formerly collective greens, cinema screenings, various spontaneous public events, as well as the informal meetings of an activist network campaigning for an alternative model of

[9] Mitchell, W.J.T. *Landscape and Power*, 2nd Edition (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002)

regeneration of the Elephant and Castle area, which would not exclude its current low- or medium-income residents and traders. Headquartered in and around the flat of Adrian G., last resident of the estate and leader of the "35 Percent" campaign for affordable housing,[10] a community of people had emerged who in large part were first drawn to this place precisely because of the unique possibilities it offered, by being temporarily exterior to the urban order of things. A condition of exteriority that can only be understood as relative though, since the Heygate's void is, as we saw it, also deeply embedded in the urban processes surrounding it, and employed as a support to the local update of an urban regime already in place elsewhere in the city.

[10] See the campaign website: <http://www.35percent.org>.

Folding operations



1. Line of the outside
2. Strategic zone
3. Strata
4. Fold (zone of subjectivation)

Fig. 3. Diagram included in the final pages of Deleuze's Foucault, in the chapter 'Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)' (1986)

In order to better understand how this relative exteriority works, it may be relevant to refer to the spatial form of the 'fold', as described by Deleuze. In the famous last chapter of his Foucault, titled 'Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)' [11], Deleuze delivers his interpretation of a problem at the core of Foucault's writings — that of the production of the New — by mapping it as a process of folding. In condensed terms, the fold is the process through which the outside (an open field of undetermined forces and potentials, which can also be understood as the future) penetrates and nests itself at the core of the inside (the realm of stratified knowledge, which we may call the past). Hereby the fold modifies the form of the present (of this thick frontline between the stratified past and the fluid future) and causes a rupture in the determinacy of this relation by channeling in some indeterminate forces, that can bring about a twist, or a bifurcation, from the linear process of stratification in time.

[11] Deleuze, G. 'Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)' in *Foucault* (Translated by S. Hand, London: The Athlone Press, 1986).

The accompanying diagram that concludes the chapter is particularly relevant here, in as much as it expresses a temporal problem in very spatial terms: it spatialises the process of change in time (see Fig. 3). It does not only describe how change can be produced, but also locates where this happens, thereby acquiring both a strategic and a political dimension. Tentatively, it is worth pushing forward this spatial reading of Deleuze's fold, and insert into the contemporary urban context.

What the fold describes is a particular condition of exteriority, an outside that is always within, in deep relation, and co-present to the inside – transforming it from the interior. In this perspective, the composite agency behind the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle area seems to deploy a similar strategy to that outlined by Deleuze, applying it to the context of the production of urban space. One could say that the evacuation of the Heygate estate amounted to a folding of some outside, undeveloped space, in the inside of the urban fabric; which was used to rewrite the history of the place in a fashion that justifies the operations of replacement; in order to finally actualise a significant urban change — in this case, a shift from housing as a right to housing as a commodity. It is easy to misinterpret the case of the Heygate's void as an exception because of its specific and unique features, such as its central position in the area being regenerated or its parallel functioning as a fabric of images. The contrary can be argued. The Heygate is a caricature, its exaggerated traits simply highlighting a process to be found among hundreds of regeneration sites across major western cities: the encircling of an invisible vacuum and the consequent generation of a localised depression, which starts putting in motion more or less massive flows of financial capital. To some degree, processes of regeneration always involve a folding of the urban fabric — be

Fig. 4. Claydon block and intervention on its roof, Heygate estate, 21 September 2011. Author's own photograph.

it around already vacant spaces, or around places whose vacancy has been actively produced.

It is then interesting to rethink the essay 'Terrains Vagues' against the backdrop of the particular context of urbanisation at the time it was written. While from the post-war period up to the late eighties the globally dominant mode of urbanisation was the sprawl, which constantly expanded the frontier of modern/urban capitalism, the reflection on the 'terrain vague' emerges at a hinge moment between two modes of urbanisation – most large cities reaching a turning point, where the extensive model of the sprawl becomes less valuable than an intensive one, and when cities start looking back at the holes they left behind in their careless expansion. The fold then becomes an urban strategy, by which the capitalist city reabsorbs its forgotten exteriors, or produces new exteriors by temporarily withdrawing from certain spaces, before re-occupying them with increased intensity. Far from being 'foreign to the urban system' [12], the voids at the core of these folds have an essential agency in the present: they find themselves at the very center of 'the city's effective circuits and productive structures'; they act as attractors in a dynamic field of investment streams, themselves the motive force of the urban changes that will materialise in the future.

[12] De Solà-Morales, I (1995). op cit.

While 'Terrains Vagues' was instrumental in bringing such urban voids to light, Solà-Morales's essay has also left a problematic heritage in architectural theory. The clear-cut divide between the interior of the city and its exterior to which the 'terrains vagues' would belong, as formulated in the essay, has casted a long shadow over the role these urban voids have been increasingly playing ever since the explosion of a neoliberal, speculative mode of urban development globally. Thus, Terrains Vagues has also contributed to relegate such urban voids to a depoliticized field of architectural musing and conjecturing: a peculiarity, a paradox, a fascinating moment of 'estrangement', yet nothing for architects to work with. To the problem he highlights in his conclusion – 'How can architecture act in the terrain vague without becoming an aggressive instrument of power and abstract reason?' – Solà-Morales provides the following answer: 'undoubtedly, through attention to continuity: not the continuity of the planned, efficient, and legitimated city but of the flows, the energies, the rhythms of the passing of time and the loss of limits.' [13] Two decades later, this answer seems unsatisfactory to us. Firstly, because of its elusive, vague character, while we claim that it is necessary to shift from the lyrical to the political register when approaching urban voids. The present essay argues against the misreading of such voids as the incidental expression of a repressed urban desire for escape and freedom, and calls for a (re-)integration of the urban voids within the strategic debates about the city and its production. And secondly, because the approach hinted at by Solà-Morales's answer – 'attention to continuity' – seems precisely opposite to that which can be articulated by using a different – and we

[13] Ibid. p.123.

would argue, more accurate – conceptual framework to characterize such 'folded interstices'. Just as they already are exploited as the incubators of a particular urban model that is materialising globally – that of an extreme commodification of urban space and all its components –, it seems worth examining, through careful analysis, whether these urban voids may also support the production of alternative urban futures.

The fold, in Deleuze's conception, is a place where the future is at stake, in the present, and against the past. A topological twist, a bypass of linear sedimentation. A process through which structural changes and radical deviations can take place, allowing new statements to be heard and new forms to be seen, faster, and with a broader extent, than through progress on established bases. If we dwell a little longer on this analogy – perhaps impertinent – between the realm of thought and the realm of the city, we can easily understand the reasons for the fold to be deployed as a strategy within a capitalist mode of urban production, which 'has necessarily targeted the breaking down of spatial barriers and the acceleration of the turnover time as fundamental to its agenda of relentless capital accumulation.'[14] Regeneration appears both as: a radical break with the sedimented history of an urban area, most often implying a replacement of its inhabitants; and the guarantee that the overarching rule of a speculative housing market is maintained, either by extending it to a new area, or by re-injecting some financial vitality where it was already in place. In spite of the drastic changes it may bring about — the obliteration of the long fought-for policy of social housing is a recurrent example — there is also a quite conservative dimension to a process of urban regeneration, in as much as it leaves unquestioned the very mode by which the city is essentially produced today – as a commodity – thereby allowing this mode to endure and expand. We ask: what are the conditions of transformation of the city, beyond its mere regeneration?

[14] Harvey, D. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. (London: Blackwell, 1996), p. 411.

Counter-strategies

Undoubtedly the most public façade of the Heygate estate, the 12-storey high, 180 meter-long Claydon block was among the first to be evacuated – turned blind by the sealing of all its windows and doors, and left in a derelict state right in front of the Elephant and Castle rail station. There, tens of thousands of commuters would pass it by everyday on their journey to Central London, its dark perspective lines converging on a horizon dominated by the glitter of the Shard. On the morning of May 11, 2011, two large painted inscriptions reading "NOW… HERE", respectively 8 x 3,5 m and 11,5 x 3,5 m, appeared on the roof of the Claydon block, as a result of an unsolicited intervention initiated by the author. [15] Below is a retroactive account of the theoretical grounds for such intervention.

[15] For documentation of the intervention, see Sebregondi, F. (2011) *The Event of Void*, op. cit.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

We have recognised the fold as a means by which changes are both negotiated and actualised. As a spatial form, it seems to accurately describe one of the strategies through which the global market of speculative urban development modifies the cities today, in ways that serve its expansion and intensification. If one were to try mobilising the fold for other purposes – to tend towards a change that would open up alternative urban outcomes – then it would make sense to look a little closer at Deleuze's abovementioned diagram and at the explanation he provides for it.

In this diagram Deleuze identifies a 'strategic zone', which corresponds to the interface between the 'strata' and the 'outside'.

> The informal outside is a battle, a turbulent, stormy zone where particular points and the relations of forces between these points are tossed about. Strata merely collected and solidified the visual dust and the sonic echo of the battle raging above them. (...) Each atmospheric state in this zone corresponds to a diagram of forces or particular features which are taken up by relations: a strategy. If strata are of the earth, then a strategy belongs to the air or the ocean. But it is the strategy's job to be fulfilled in the stratum. [16]

[16] Deleuze, G. (1986), ibid.

If we apply this reading to the urban folds, we can identify a strategic zone precisely at the limit of such folds, where the folded outside – the urban void – meets the city – the strata. The permeability of such zone is a key stake in the determination of the kind of new that will be produced through the process of folding: control over the set of relations that will be 'taking up' forces of the outside means control over the channeling of these forces into the strategic objective that is set. In the case of the city, a localised void can be seen as immediately crisscrossed by those 'forces of the outside', in as much as a void opens up a multiplicity of fluid and conflicting future scenarios, only one of which will materialise there. As argued above, the discourse supporting processes of speculative urban regeneration are often articulated through landscape, which determines the way the area to be regenerated is perceived from the inside of the city, and projects upon it the particular future scenario chosen by the developers that will finance it. A complement to this process of landscape building is one of control over the urban void to be regenerated (whatever its scale, from a single building to an entire area)– which shall not be accessed nor practiced as a void, but entirely sacrificed to speculative practices,[17] cut out of the urban present to allow for the incubation of a predetermined future. In the city, urban speculation appears to be the main set of relations in which the 'forces of the outside' contained in a folded urban void are taken.

[17] The term "sacrificed" here refers to Giorgio Agamben's concept of "profanation", which he describes as 'restoring into common use' of those things that have been sacrified, that is, excluded, separated, bounded, put out of access and touch. See Agamben, G. *Profanations* (New York: Zone Books 2007).

> (...) there are not only particular features taken up by the relations between forces, but particular features of resistance that are apt to modify and overturn these relations and to change the un-stable diagram. [18]

[18] Deleuze, G. (1986), ibid.

If an urban void amounts to a field of yet undetermined forces in the city, it may potentially be overturned, and give birth to a different future than the one it is vigorously framed to produce within a process of speculative urban regeneration. In this perspective, access to that void seems inherently political. Urban voids are places from which to stand back and question the city we are accustomed to, places in which one is confronted with the concrete possibility of multiple alternatives. As such, they have the potential of altering urban perceptions and subjectivities. "Disentangling the possible from the Capital", to use the words of Franco Berardi, is perhaps one of the main political problems of our times.[19]
In the current configuration of the process of urban production, the pragmatic necessity – as the Situationists would have it [20] – of inventing and designing possible futures for the city, is essentially left to the limited imagination of investors and developers. It therefore seems relevant, as a form of creative resistance, to develop tactics of visibility and access to these withdrawn fragments of the city, in which anyone is called to invent a possible use of the site.

[19] Franco Berardi "Bifo" in conversation with Nina Power, August 28th, 2011 at Auto Italia South East, London SE 1.

[20] Kotany, A. / Vaneigem, R. (1961) , op. cit. (Point 8. 'Conditions of Dialogue').

Fig. 5. Holes in the hoardings around the building site of "Les Halles". Still from L'Écume des Jours, dir. Michel Gondry, France, 2013.

This point does not bring us back to an approach of urban voids focused on the contemplative experience that they may offer – an approach that we have partly criticised for its ambiguity in Solà Morales's essay. There are concrete examples of the workings of an urban void in the production of alternative, radical subjectivities. A key example is the building site of 'Les Halles' in Paris in the mid-1970s, soon renamed 'the hole'[21] : at the same time as the city was building an unprecedented commercial and transportation hub in its very centre, the hole, which lasted for years,

[21] Eudeline, P. (2003) 'Village Punk', Nova, December; p.30: "And then there was the hole. Marvellous abyss with its wooden barricades, nailed up in haste, soon covered with layers of posters. A building site. For many years. Which were the sweetest of the *Halles*."

became the birthplace of the French Punk movement and of a series of other marginal counter-cultures – whose pioneers established their rally point behind the fences that encircled it. A culture of contestation and refusal of the mainstream future that was being promoted could coalesce there. Arguably, it is still running as an active current within today's political subjectivity in France.

Interestingly enough, the hole of 'Les Halles' has reappeared today, due to another massive regeneration scheme: after only thirty years of existence, the vast and structurally sound 'Forum des Halles' was demolished, to be replaced with a new, programmatically identical urban complex that will allow to channel more people, goods, and money in and out of the center of Paris. And again, it is entirely concealed behind 3-meter high hoardings – this time drastically secured from any intrusion. In his recent filmic adaptation of Boris Vian's novel L'Écume des Jours, director Michel Gondry makes an interesting comment on this point. [22] Among transparent limousines, cocktail-making pianos, and other surreal elements that are dispersed throughout the film, at some point the two protagonists meet in 'Les Halles' – also in construction in the film – and the hoardings around the building site are all pierced with holes. Colin and Chloé spontaneously pass their head through them and spend a moment looking at the much bigger hole... Something, indeed, unimaginable today. Gondry's poetic clin d'oeil hints at what can arguably be considered a political stake: that of making the transient states of the city appear. Rare are the sites undergoing urban development that are not behind opaque hoardings today – that both conceal the building site, and display an image of what will be built there. Beyond the dubious aesthetic argument, there is a clear interest for developers and city-makers to maintain a homogenous perception of the city as it is, and to monitor the amount of change one is allowed to envision. A hole, a void, a building site, is in itself the expression of a possible alternative, and perhaps an invitation to all citizens to ask themselves what could emerge there.

[22] L'Ecume des Jours (English title: *Mood Indigo*), dir. Michel Gondry (France, 2013).

The intervention on the roof of the Claydon block attempted to do two things. On the one hand, to disrupt the promotional landscape in which the derelict Heygate estate was framed, by affirming the material presence of the empty complex not yet demolished and replaced. On the other hand, to invite to its access, exploration, and practice – the hand painted words indirectly pointing out to the fact that the estate was still accessible, if one were to look for a way in. The result of the intervention lasted until September 2013: two years during which the last few inhabited flats on the estate were being evacuated, the fenced-off space increased, the local campaign for affordable housing faced more and more drawbacks, and an intense construction of new low-to mid-rise housing took place in the surrounding area. Perhaps the most interesting critique of this intervention is provided by the response it triggered from the developer of the area.

Fig. 6. 'Photomontage' extracted from the planning application n. 13/AP/2477, submitted by Lend Lease on 10 August 2013, for the installation of a 25 x 17.5 m banner on the façade of the Claydon block, Heygate estate.

Blind spot

On August 15, 2013, German national newspaper Die Welt published an online article on Britain's ongoing social decline and "war of the rich against the poor", which featured as its main image a photograph of the Heygate estate seen from the Elephant and Castle rail station (with the intervention clearly visible on the roof of the Claydon block). [23] That same week, the urban development corporation Lend Lease, behind the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle area, submitted a planning application for installing a 25 x 17.5 m advertising banner on that same façade of the Heygate that read: "Change is HERE, transformation starts NOW". [24] The photomontage included in the planning application was based on the same picture used by Die Welt, and in the technical drawing showing the dimensions of the banner in elevation, the applicant carefully redrew the outline of the hand-painted letters on the roof of the block – itself otherwise only represented as a light grey rectangle. (see Fig. 6)

Southwark Council approved the application and the banner was installed in September 2013. During its installation, which lasted for several days, the original intervention on the roof of the Claydon block was covered by a new layer of graffiti, most likely facilitated by a breach in the security measures that prevented access to that roof. Thereby, the message that the banner explicitly made reference to was erased, and only its (counter-) détournement was visible. The banner itself didn't last long either: almost immediately defaced, it was definitively removed within a month of its installation.

[23] < http://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article119060642/Grossbritannien-auf-dem-Weg-zum-Armenhaus-der-EU.html >

[24] Planning application n. 13/AP/2477, 10 August 2013. Full application documents are accessible at <http://planningonline.southwark.gov.uk/AcolNetCGI.exe?ACTION=UNWRAP&RIPNAME=Root.PgeDocs&TheSystemkey=9550740>

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

What this anecdote seems to confirm is, above all, the strategic dimension of the Heygate façade visible form the Elephant & Castle rail station, and of the landscape that it participates in constructing. The efforts deployed by Lend Lease to re-integrate the Claydon block within the discourse that promotes the urban regeneration they lead seems to indicate that the intervention on the roof was perceived as a challenge to that discourse. The limits of such folded urban voids can indeed be thought of as a 'strategic zone': a predominant discourse is formulated through landscape, whereby 'forces of the outside' are taken up by determined relations and materialise into the 'strata'; [25] yet it is there that these determined relations can be challenged and possibly overturned, so that a divergent outcome may become actualised.

We have argued that urban folds and the voids at their core are a motive force of current processes of city-making. The form of exteriority described by Deleuze's concept of the fold – an outside that is nested in an inside, transforming it from within – allows to take into account the temporal dimension of urban voids and the latency they generate, which is crucial to understand the role they play in a speculative mode of urban development. As powerful transformative agencies, urban folds can perhaps be overturned: they are strategic places to act upon in the negotiation of urban futures alternative to those promoted by profit-driven urban developers. As such, they tend to be framed as blind spots in the urban fabric – withdrawn from the present of a city and concealed behind an image of the predetermined urban scenarios that will replace them. The paradox highlited by Solà-Morales remains: the political potential of such places exists only insofar as they are open-ended and call for the imagination of their use; it is immediately dissolved when they become designed for a determined practice. Yet designing what should occupy a void may not be the only way architects, and spatial practitioners at large, can engage with urban folds. Another way – one that was tested through the intervention recounted in the essay – would be to challenge their invisibility and withdrawal in the city, so that an increasing number of urban dwellers may encounter these suspended places, where the future of the city is materially *in question*.

[25] Coincidentally, the first major redevelopment project in the Elephant and Castle area, completed in 2010 and located right in front of the Heygate estate (and visible in fig. 1 to the right), is called the *Strata Tower*, 'a landmark for urban living'. <http://www.stratalondon.com>

Fig. 7. Heygate banner installed, 15 October 2013. Courtesy of Gary Kinsm Claydon block just after start of demolition, 5 March 2014. Author's own photograph.

The author would like to acknowledge the support provided by Adrian G. and the "35 percent" campaign, whose regular reports and updates on the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle have been a great resource for the present essay.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.2 (1)

Relational Architecture: Dense Voids and Violent Laughters

Teresa Stoppani

Starting from an analysis of Georges Bataille's text 'The Labyrinth' (1935-6), this essay addresses the always changing relationship between architecture and the city, considering in particular the architectural 'void', as both a physical space and a disciplinary domain. In the city, architecture operates in a 'void' that is dense of tensions, unevenness, singularities, stratifications and movements, and must devise strategies for addressing and inhabiting these networks of relations. Focusing in particular on Peter Eisenman's definition of the 'interstitial' as a spacing condition of form-form relation, and on Rem Koolhaas's 'strategy of the void' and its congestion with architectural 'junk', this text argues that different postmodern positions on architecture in the city have addressed the 'void' as a space that is not feared, and therefore 'designed' by the architectural project, but tensioned with the potentiality of Bataille's convulsive laughter: that destabilizing and de-compositional force that transverses relations of structured organizational contiguity, and challenges their forms with a force that travels across the (architectural) 'void', revealing the unstable and dynamic nature of both architecture and urban constructs.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Introduction

Architecture operates in the city through a complex network of relations that always reach beyond its own specifics. The space of the difference, of the non-coincidence between architecture and the city both defines and delimits architecture as a discipline, producing the complexity of the inhabited built environment. While architecture "makes" the city, the city is made not only of architecture; on the other hand, architecture does not only provide a defining component of the built city, but produces also an ongoing discourse on the changing nature of the urban environment. Architecture is a partial presence in the city, and the city is not the only context and concern of architecture. Yet, there are other and less evident forms of engagement and uneasy overlaps which articulate the relation between architecture and the city. This essay addresses the relational nature of architecture in the city, exploring the less obvious and less visible forms of their relation. I call the spaces of these relations "architectural voids", not because these are physically void spaces in the city, but because they seem not defined by architectural interventions (buildings, projects, designs). This difference is, of course, itself far from clear. What is architecture? What is not architecture? The question produces the need for a redefinition. As architecture is not only building and it addresses not only buildings, its work in the context of the city must concern itself also with that which is not architecture (but is built), as well as with that which is not built but both influences and is influenced by architecture (and is therefore its concern). Even when such voids are not described as a physical void (a vacant lot, an unbuilt area, an empty expanse) or represented as an architectural void (a space defined and built by concerns that are not those of architectural design), these "voids" are densely occupied by architectural concerns. In other words, architecture cannot dispose of its surroundings, be they physical or intangible, and these "architectural voids" are indeed very dense of architectural concerns and possibilities. This text addresses the role of these "dense voids" in articulating the relation between architecture and the city, as they call for a constant negotiation and for a redefinition of architecture as a discipline – a constantly changing discipline defining itself "in relation". What emerges from the exploration of this idea is the possibility to expand the definition of architecture in a dynamic sense, while re-establishing its critical role in the urban space.

Architecture has always borrowed narratives, tools, concepts and images from other disciplines, always defining itself in relation with an "other". Architecture is by definition relational: internally, in how it organizes itself through rules or paradigms of form and space making; externally, in how it relates to forms of inhabitation, use, and cultural and physical conditions. The relationality of architecture is ever more evident in the city, in the unresolved and always changing relationship between architecture and its urban contexts. Different schools of thought and disciplinary definitions

attribute to architecture more or less formative roles in the city and in its extended metropolitan and territorial dimension. The problem remains however, of how architecture addresses the field of its relations and how it engages with what is "not architecture", defining it and being defined by it: the architectural "void" in the city – intended as both a physical space and a disciplinary domain.

Modern Architecture created an ideological pneumatic void in which to operate with its fiction of the tabula rasa, a cultural operation of relabeling which dismissed the past as no longer architecturally relevant. This fiction of a cleansed totality failed, and its fragmented implementations found themselves immersed in a very full architectural void that the discipline once again had to face. The necessary discontinuity that the architectural project produces thus finds itself operating in a void that is already dense of tension, unevenness, singularities, stratifications and movement, and architecture must devise strategies for addressing and inhabiting these networks of relations.

Different postmodern positions on architecture in the city have addressed the architectural "void" as a space that, while not feared (and therefore "designed" in order to control it), is understood as tensioned by potentially destabilizing forces that transverse and challenge relations of structured organizational contiguity. It is these forces that such positions aim to activate and render explicit (embody) in the city. (I am thinking here of the theoretical proposals of Bernard Tschumi, Peter Eisenman and Rem Koolhaas, in the 1970s and 1980s in particular). Void space is no longer considered an uncontrollable dimension (the non-city outside opposed to the historical walled city), or the controlled result of a design carved inside what the project has already determined (consider, for instance, the clear distinctions of public and private space etched in Giovanni Battista Nolli's plan of Rome,[1] but also the even bolder black and white opposition of figure and ground in the city of collage proposed by Colin Rowe [2]).

The urban void is no longer an intimidating vacuum of design that lies beyond the control of the project and can be subjected instead only to ideological domination. In architecture's recent past this domination took two different forms. On one hand the ideal of early Modernism proposed a tabula rasa where the void space is dominated by the gaze of the architect and vectorialized by transportation routes (mainly motorways), and thus indirectly controlled (think, for instance, of Le Corbusier's urban proposals, from the Plan Voisin for Paris, to the Ville Radieuse, to the Plan Obus for Algiers). On the other hand, and as a reaction to this, the avant-garde architectural projects of the 1960s and early 1970s, apparently treading lightly on the ground, devised in fact its nearly total neutralization and artificialization, rendering it available to the forces of non-design (as, for instance, in the city- or world-scale projects by the British group Archigram and those of the Italian collective Superstudio).

[1] G. B. Nolli, *Topografia di Roma* (Rome, 1748).

[2] C. Rowe and F. Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press, 1978).

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

But what happens if we think the possibility of a pre-architectural and pre-urban void – that is, before it is addressed, defined or designed by architecture – as being always already implicated in a network of relationships, of which the architectural is only one of the possible codified forms of expression? Never neutral and always tensioned, this void is never "empty", but is both made and occupied by the forces that make it and use it. Here I consider a series of architectural positions which, from the 1970s to today, have chosen to inhabit and activate this void, theorizing it and using it in their projects without ever attempting to "design" it through formal control.

Violent laughter as architectural tool?

In his text on the Labyrinth, Georges Bataille discusses the 'composite character of beings', suggesting that at the basis of human life lies 'a principle of insufficiency'.[3] It is the image of the labyrinth, its incompleteness and its intrinsic unknowability, that allows Bataille to address human insufficiency as a dynamic form of being, and to question the stability of human social forms. In this context the reference to the Labyrinth is important because, while the labyrinth is one of the archetypal spaces at the origin of architecture, it is also significantly characterized by mutable and experiential qualities, rather than by a given form that can be defined and known in its every detail. For Bataille, man exists as a '"being in relation"',[4] in a relationality that is mediated by words and by the representations of existence that are constructed through language; therefore 'knowing – when a man knows his neighbour – is never anything but existence composed for an instant'.[5] Bataille extends the idea of the temporary and unstable nature of the connection between human beings from the interpersonal relation to the much vaster and complex network that is human society. The 'knowledge of human beings thus appears as a mode of biological connection, unstable but just as real as the connections between cells in tissue'. Crucially, '[t]he exchange between two human particles in fact possesses the faculty of surviving momentary separation. A man is only a particle inserted in unstable and entangled wholes'.[6] What is relevant here is the fact that the connection between humans forming 'unstable and entangled wholes' occurs not in isolation but within a tissue, that is, it is a connection within connections, part of wholes that are both complex and plural. Furthermore, this connection is not only momentary and labile, but also productive of memory, as it leaves traces that enable the acknowledgement and the recognition of a past. It is, also, a relationship that allows for physical and temporal discontinuity. It is the physical spatial discontinuity within temporal repetition that becomes crucial when we speak of the city, and of the work of architecture in it.

3 G. Bataille 'The Labyrinth' (1935-6) in G. Bataille, *Visions of Excess. Selected Writings, 1927-39* (trans. A. Stoekl) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 172. Writer, critic, philosopher, independent intellectual who operated outside academia and across disciplines, Georges Bataille (1897-1962) offers in his work a counter-reading of the reality in which he operated. The subversive character of his texts does not consist in a demolition from the outside of established sets of values, but in a systematic and pungent exposé of their contradictions and intrinsic ambiguities.

4 Ibid, p. 174.

5 Ibid

6 Ibid

The relational possibilities of architecture in the city, beyond the physical connections established and materialized by the infrastructural networks (which now include also the non visible and the non always physically situated connections of digital networks), can be redefined as an instant of composite existence, an unstable connection between beings that contributes to the making of the 'unstable and entangled wholes' [7] that Bataille proposes. For Bataille, being as a whole is composed of particles that maintain their autonomy, and whose connection is momentary, partial, and precarious: 'every isolable element of the universe always appears as a particle that can enter into composition with a whole that transcends it. Being is only found as a whole composed of particles whose relative autonomy is maintained'.[8] Being is always precarious and negotiated, yet Bataille acknowledges the formation in this relational system of knots or concentrations, nuclei where 'being hardens'.[9] It is at this point that he shifts his argument from the idea of 'being' to its multiple aggregations, and to society and its key form of expression, the city. With the multiple aggregations of being

> relatively stable wholes are produced, whose center is a city, in its early form a corolla that encloses a double pistil of sovereign and god. In the case where many cities abdicate their central function in favor of a single city, an empire forms around a capital where sovereignty and the gods are concentrated; the gravitation around a center then degrades the existence of peripheral cities, where the organs that constituted the totality of being wilt. [10]

This is essentially a condensed description of the traditional historical European city, and of its organisation around its dual centre of political and religious powers. It is also the history of the super-urban centralization produced and organized by nation states, and of the formation of their capitals. Bataille does not stop here, and his dynamic vision sets the whole process in motion, in an ongoing cycle of constructions and destructions, organizations and their explosions: 'universality, at the summit, causes all existence to explode and decomposes it with violence'.[11] As dynamic as Being, the City changes, and indeed it can be only if it changes. Far from smooth or gradual, this change is produced by the explosion of a discontinuity. Bataille exemplifies it with the idea of the 'laughter'.

> Laughter intervenes in these value determinations of being as the expression of the circuit of movements of attraction across a human field. It manifests itself each time a change in level suddenly occurs: it characterizes all vacant lives as ridiculous. [...] But laughter is not only the composition of those it assembles into a unique convulsion; it most often decomposes without consequence, and sometimes with a virulence that is so pernicious that it even puts in question composition itself and the wholes across which it functions.[12]

7 Ibid

8 Ibid

9 Ibid

10 Ibid

11 Ibid

12 Ibid

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Laughter becomes the expression of a tension that pervades both Being and the City, it varies in intensity activating societies and cities as dynamic fields, and manifests itself in paroxysms that produce both cohesion and discontinuity. 'Laughing with' and 'laughing at' establish relations of association and opposition, produce condensations in groups, and construct difference, but both laughters are always labile, volatile and renegotiable. What interests Bataille is not only the violent explosion and the dynamic nature of the laughter, but the fact that laughter is contagious in both an associative and a dissociative way. To a laughter responds another laughter, and it is the possibility and the intensity of this reaction that enables him to question the centrality of power and of the city by means of the very same forces that produce them:

> [...] through a necessary reversal, it [laughter] is sent back [...] from the periphery to the center, each time [...] the center in turn reveals an insufficiency comparable to that of the particles that orbit around it. [...] laughter traverses the human pyramid like a network of endless waves that renew themselves in all directions. This reverberated convulsion chokes, from one end to the other, the innumerable being of man ... [13]

[13] Ibid

The network of relations that organize social life is thus destabilised and set in motion, the centre is emptied of meaning and of its controlling power, and the pyramidal social order is shaken. Architecture is not only a metaphor here. As the embodiment of the rituals that both manifest and confirm the power of the centre, architecture can also become the ritual of embodiment that reveals the insufficiency of the centre.[14] If we embrace Bataille's idea of the laughter as the agent of both the composition of elements and the decomposition of form, then in the city seen as a dynamic relational space, architecture needs to be redefined, from a role of control, definition and enclosure, to a nodal player and activator of its tensions. Although it is not directly referred to by the contemporary architectural discourse, Bataille's image of a city that combines composition and decomposition, constructs interconnected discontinuities and operates through densely tensioned voids recurs in the architectural projects which from the 1970s to the present have critically addressed the legacy of Modernism. Appropriating, using and transforming the architectural and formal language of modern architecture, these projects attempt to come to terms with Modernism's unresolved relation to the city, be it the existing historical city or the new one proposed on the tabula rasa (always only partially realised and altogether already compromised by reality). [15]

[14] '[I]t is not only the composition of elements that constitutes the incandescence of being, but its decomposition in its mortal form. [...] laughter is thus assumed by the totality of being.' Ibid, p. 177.

[15] Bernard Tschumi's architectural provocations and theoretical projects and writings of the 1970s were heavily and explicitly informed by Bataille's theories. In the text 'The Architectural Paradox' (1975) Tschumi draws from Bataille's architectural metaphors of the Pyramid and the Labyrinth, to expose the intrinsic tension between architecture as a formal definition and embodiment of hierarchies (the pyramid as a structuring conceptual device), and architecture as a spatial experience (the making of and the journey through the unknown labyrinth). B. Tschumi 'The Architectural Paradox', in *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 27-52. Other architectural projects and texts of the same years do not refer to Bataille's theories in a direct way, but they equally question the stability of architectural forms, social structures, and urban orders.

The city as an unstable whole

Bataille's text on the Labyrinth uses of the figures of the Labyrinth and the Pyramid to define different forms of order and of experience, and their role in the making and the undoing of the city, which is directly connected to the making (and changing) of the social being of man. An unstable 'stable' whole, the city is subject to processes of formation, centralization, explosion and decomposition. It is in this circuitous movement of composition and decomposition that Bataille introduces the 'laughter' as a sudden change: the ridiculous that dismantles established orders produces change, as it composes those that it assembles in a collective convulsion. Laughter traverses the human pyramid of order in a reverberated convulsion that destabilizes. Bataille's true understanding of the city is better understood, rather than from the explicit architectural metaphors that he uses, through the very disruptive action performed by his 'disturbing prose',[16] and through his own strategy of transgression of established hierarchies. His prose is itself part of the unstructured violent laughter that he writes about, an anti-discursive mode that refuses form. Even his entries for the Critical Dictionary of the magazine Documents are not definitions, but performed transgressions of definitions. His own writings, that is, embody the convulsive force of which he writes.

Bataille's work on the Labyrinth can be considered in relation to a rethinking of architecture in the city, not because it evokes a physical place or its project, but because the space of the labyrinth – which in its mythological origin remained retrospectively unknowable even to Daedalus, its architect – offers a fitting image of the insufficiency and incompleteness of existence, in the sense that no being is ever complete and is constantly redefined in an open relation to others. The Labyrinth is also the figure of an interior always related to an exterior that, equally, cannot be specified in advance (projected). Being in relation then is expressed not only by language, but also by relations of spaces that intentionally fail to define both their boundaries and their inner order (the labyrinth, but also the city). Like language, the city puts us in relation to others, in ways that cannot be controlled. This is of course the contemporary city that has dismissed or surpassed the enclosures and physical divisions of the historical city, as well as the spatial control and allocation of activities (zoning) of the modernist city. It is the contemporary city that accepts not only the uncontrollable violence of the burst of laughter, but also its multidirectional ripples, which transform the space of the city into an active (magnetized) field without a centre. If we accept this vision of the contemporary city as a space of relations and disorientation and as a space without a centre, the role and the possibilities of architecture in it need to be redefined in a way that goes beyond a mere 'surfing' on the ripple of change.[17] This needs to be a breaking point for architecture, at a time when it is divested of previous certainties and needs

[16] N. Leach, 'Georges Bataille' in N. Leach (ed.), Rethinking Architecture (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 20.

[17] That is, beyond Rem Koolhaas's idea of an architecture that 'does not control the waves, but [...] recognises them and knows how to go with them, even against them'. R. Koolhaas, in R. Koolhaas, B. Mau and OMA, S,M,L,XL (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), p. 1286.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

to reinvent itself, its languages and its possible ways to negotiate its role within the city.

Relational architecture

Bataille explicitly discusses architecture and its role in society on several occasions in his work. His entries for the Critical Dictionary of Documents on 'Architecture', the 'Slaughterhouse', the 'Museum', 'Dust', and the 'Skyscraper'[18] show how architecture represents society and incarnates its structures and orders. Architecture is pictured as one of the disciplines that petrify society, providing it with a 'mathematical overcoat' [19] of rationality, stability and oppression. Slow in its own changes and in incorporating society's changes, architecture builds a resistance to the violent laughter of change. But Bataille's most interesting passages on architecture – most often in the form of indirect passing references, as in the text on the Labyrinth – are those in which architecture is referred to a wider context. It is there that, rather than focusing on a specific example or building type, architecture is opened up and almost dissolved into a more general discourse on the city and society. What emerges is the difficult relationship that architecture establishes with a space that it cannot control in either form or time: a space that is apparently void of architecture but is in fact full of tensions and shaken by the Bataillean laughter. It is precisely this dense 'void' full of relations that recent architectural theories have been addressing, in a long stretch of time and recurring reworked ideas.

The relational nature of architecture may seem obvious, and it is intrinsic to its making since the very beginnings (in themselves multiple, uncertain, open and relational). Designed for human inhabitation and interaction, architecture needs to respond to requirements that are both practical and more extensively intangible (social, political, psychological, etc., depending on its spatial and temporal conditions of production). Architecture establishes, that is, a series of external relations, rules, narratives and situations (what Peter Eisenman has called the "exteriority" of architecture). Yet, in each instance of its implementation, in its every "act" (design, construction, practice, writing), architecture calls into question also its own languages, its materials, its history as a discipline, thus producing a self-redefinition at every re-enactment. Architecture changes itself in each and every of its "instalments". It is enmeshed in a web of relations, both external ("exteriority") and internal ("interiority"), which affect it and which it produces.[20] These relations occupy also a space that is only apparently void of architecture's direct intervention. It is in these apparent voids that the relational nature of architecture emerges more evidenty, where possible alternative practices of architecture are better revealed: it is in these "voids" that the silence of architecture, but also the discourse and the critical space of the written text of architecture,

[18] G. Bataille, in G. Bataille, M. Leiris, M. Griaule, R. Desnos, Encyclopaedia Acephalica (London: Atlas Press, 1995). 'Architecture', pp. 35-6; 'Slaughterhouse', pp. 72-3; 'Museum', p. 64; 'Dust', pp. 42-3; 'Skyscraper', pp. 69-72.

[19] G. Bataille, 'Architecture', in Encyclopaedia Acephalica, p. 35.

[20] Peter Eisenman has introduced the notions of an "interiority" and an "exteriority" of architecture, in order to distinguish between elaborations that are intrinsic to formal research within architecture (this, too, always already informed by different geometries and forms of representations), and the moments in which architecture opens up to external concerns and imports an exterior narrative, be it religious, natural, technological, mediatic, geographic or digital. The definitions are clearly summarized and systematically exemplified through the texts and projects included in P. Eisenman, Diagram Diaries (London, Thames & Hudson, 1999).

take place, as well as other alternative practices. It is in the space of this interstice that the relational nature of architecture becomes more evident.

The relational nature of art practices has been proposed by Nicolas Bourriaud in the 1990s as a new aesthetics and as a form of material criticality. Bourriaud suggests that 'interactive, user-friendly and relational' art practice could 'open up [...] obstructed passages, and connect levels of reality kept apart from one another'.[21] This view marks the shifts occurred from art practices 'traditionally earmarked for their "representation"' to a praxis that appears 'to be a rich loam for social experiments, like a space partly protected from the uniformity of behavioural patterns'.[9] It is in the interstices of these partly protected spaces that 'perceptive, experimental, critical and participatory models'[12] operate to propose 'ways of living and models of action within the existing real'[13]. What is described here is not a revolution, but the possibility of a coexistence of other forms of operation within an existing condition. Relational art takes as 'its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context'.[15] At this point, as Bataille's discourse in 'The Labyrinth' had shifted almost naturally and automatically from the individual being to the plurality of being to the relations and tensions that make the city, Bourriaud not only contextualises the praxis of relational art in the urban environment, but observes how the evolution of art toward a relational practice 'stems essentially from the birth of a world-wide urban culture, and from the extension of this city model to more or less all cultural phenomena'.[15] The 'growing urbanisation of the artistic experiment' then defines not only the location of art practices, but intrinsically characterizes the modus operandi of a practice that is produced by, and also produces, 'a system of intensive encounters'.[15] This is an art form whose 'substrate is formed by intersubjectivity, and which takes being-together as a central theme, the "encounter" between beholder and picture, and the collective elaboration of meaning',[15] and the social dimension of the city is its natural environment. For Bourriaud the work of art thus intended 'represents a social interstice', intended in Marxian terms not as a rupture but as 'a space in human relations which fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system'[16] suggesting other possibilities within this system. Therefore, 'contemporary art models more than it represents, and fits into the social fabric more than it draws inspiration therefrom'.[18] Form is redefined from within as a system of relations, as a 'coherent unit, a structure (independent entity of inner dependencies) which shows the typical features of a world [...] a principle of dynamic agglutination' [20]. '"[F]ormations" rather than "forms"'[21], art's 'form only exists in the encounter and in the dynamic relationship enjoyed by an artistic proposition with other formations, artistic or otherwise'.[21] In different ways relational art claims 'the sphere of human relations as artwork venue'[44], but Bourriaud warns,

[21] Nicolas Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics (Paris, Les presses du reel, 2002), p. 8. The following quotations from this volume are marked by the page number in brackets.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

> These approaches do not stem from a "social" or "sociological" form of art. They are aimed at the formal space-time constructs that do not represent alienation, which do not extend the division of labour into forms. The exhibition is an interstice, defined in relation to the alienation reigning everywhere else.[82]

Dense voids and the interstitial

The idea of the interstice as a space of coexistence and experimentation of other forms of architecture within and as an interference with dominant systems has been addressed by Peter Eisenman, whose writings and projects on the 'interstitial' in architecture have taken the definition of design beyond the production of a form in relation to a function.[22] While Eisenman's definition of the 'processes of the interstitial' remains exquisitely architectural and formal, his project attempts to break and blur the established dualities of architecture through a consideration of the 'spacing' that it performs. Architectural form is thus divorced from the requirements of a prescriptive function, and while the production of architectural form remains the main purpose of the process, form (or rather the process of forming) is precariously generated by the introduction in the design process of a secondary diagram that is used as an interference within the functional programme of the project's brief. The architectural interstitial thus produced is not an in-between space between solid and void, or between the architecturally controlled and the non-designed, but a space of reinvention of authorship in the architectural design process. In this scenario, architectural authorship does not produce a design decision that controls form, but is the agent that introduces the interference (the 'blurring') in the functional diagram of architecture. Architecture is no longer signified by its function, but it works within the condition of space making without predetermining a form compromised by reality – it is a relational form of variation.

Bataille had already disrupted the definitions of architecture determined by function, and had performed a fresh reading of architecture's rituals, seeing the Museum as a purifying system for its visitors, and the Slaughterhouse as a vestige of the sacrificial temple. In architecture, Eisenman's process of the 'interstitial' produces a spacing condition that is determined by a relation of form to form, rather than by an opposition of form to space: what results from this process is a spacing – a space in process, rather than a given static condition – that, liberated from functional determination, enables the coexistence and overlaps of differences (of forms, of occupations) and vibrates in tension. Eisenman's process of the interstitial introduces an interference in the diagram of architecture and, through an aleatory, arbitrary, 'even chaotic activity',[23] it draws architecture out of its interiority, and makes it function 'by

[22] P. Eisenman, Eisenman Inside Out: Selected Writings, 1963-1988 (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2004). P. Eisenman, Written into the Void: Selected writings, 1990-2004 (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

[23] P. Eisenman, 'Processes of the Interstitial: Notes on Zaera-Polo's Idea of the Machinic', in P. Eisenman, Written into the Void: Selected writings, 1990-2004 (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 57.

contagion, rather than by comparison, subordinate neither by the laws of resemblance nor utility'.[24] Liberated from the exclusive imperatives of form as resemblance and of function as utility, architecture can thus be opened to incorporate the tensions of its outside in the very process of its making. In architectural design this corresponds to a 'blurring' of the distinction of the background and the figure in the definition of the form of architecture. Eisenman's walls do not crumble in front of Bataille's convulsive laughter, but shake with it to reinvent a new architecture. His project progresses not by opposing figure and ground, but by constructing a relationship of figure and figure. This produces a condition of spacing in which the operation of the interstitial (not a physical space in-between) can propose 'a void within a void, an overlapping within space of space, creating a density in space not given by the forming of a container within a profile'.[25] The interstitial addresses and brings into architecture an operation of spacing that traditional forms and practices of architecture cannot explain, or are able to confront only through the opposition of volume and space, solid and void. 'The condition of this new idea of the interstitial is thus one of movement as opposed to its former condition of stasis.'[26]

Post-architectural clumps

For Eisenman, the process of the interstitial in architecture can equally produce a void or a densely occupied space. Translated to the urban scale and retrospectively considered, this point can help to understand the consistency of Rem Koolhaas's position on the contemporary city, as it oscillated (but only apparently) from the 1980s urban 'strategy of the void' to the total congestion of the text Junkspace[27] in 2000. After the Delirious New York[28] indigestion on an alternative and congested North-American architectural modernity, in the late 1980s Rem Koolhaas refocused his attention on the European city, proposing a critical post-architectural modernity through a series of urban projects. '"Free" of architecture' and dealing 'with "nothingness"',[29] these projects proposed to organize the city through its voids to 'create new cultural conditions'[30], proposing 'a new conception of the city, a city no longer defined by its built space but by its absences or empty spaces'.[31] In the same years Koolhaas put forward his proposal for a research to address 'the yet to be recognised beauty of the late twentieth century urban landscape [...] a research into the emerging forms of architecture in the city of today, [...] to search into the consequences and possibilities of actual mutations', and document and interpret 'a number of apparently spontaneous and independent processes at work in cities'. [32]

24 Ibid

25 Ibid

26 Ibid

27 R. Koolhaas, 'Junkspace' in A+U Special Issue: OMA @ Work (May 2000), pp. 16-24. Here I use the version in A.K. Sykes, A. K. (ed.) Constructing a New Agenda. Architectural Theory 1993-2009 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press 2010), pp. 134-151.

28 R. Koolhaas, Delirious New York. A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan (London & New York: Thames and Hudson, 1978).

29 R. Koolhaas, 'Postscript. Introduction for new research "The Contemporary City"', A+U, 217 (October 1988), p. 152.

30 Ibid

31 R. Koolhaas, 1994, p.29.

32 R. Koolhaas, 'Postscript. Introduction for new research "The Contemporary City"', p. 152.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

> *These processes all seem to lead to an unavoidable fragmentation of the existing city, a displacement of the centre of gravity of urban dynamics from the city centre to the urban periphery and a remarkable ingenuity in avoiding urbanistic rules.* [33]

[33] Ibid

A few years later, when in 'Beyond Delirious' (1994) Koolhaas considers Giovanni Battista Piranesi's reconstruction of the Roman Forum, he is not interested in identifying and discussing the recognizable large geometrical forms associated with its major public monuments, but in the 'smaller debris, programmatic plankton in which presumably the less formal activities of the city are accommodated'.[34] And, commenting on the mid-eighteenth century etching but thinking of the contemporary city, he continues: 'This mixture of formal and informal elements and the mixture of order and disorder which this single image represents are the essential conditions of the city.'[35] At a vaster scale than Eisenman's projects, OMA's (Koolhaas's Office for Metropolitan Architecture) projects of urban "voids" are inevitably related to – and in fact working for and inviting in – the coexistence of their necessary other: the spontaneous fragment, the debris, the plankton of existence that (re)occupy the architectural and urban void. This is a very dense and very mutable void, shaken by the reverberating ripples of the Bataillean return laughter, and the agent of the demise of an architecture of prescriptive formal, social and programmatic definition. The counterpart of these dense (and tense) urban voids translates into the possibility of buildings of 'incredible' density 'with no programmatic stability. [...] The liberating formula of such a clump of a building could be that we would no longer have to be very intense about making buildings for specific programs'.[36] What Eisenman defines in terms of a generative architectural process by interference, Koolhaas finds in the city, as a sort of architectural ready-unmade to be embraced by an architectural project that has lost the exclusivity of programmatic and formal definition. 'If we consider these clumps of buildings mainly as permanent accommodations for provisional activities, [...] [w]e no longer have to look for the rigid coincidence between form and program'.[37] This dense and tense void, coagulated in an architectural clump that no longer relates form to programme and no longer has exclusive control over form itself, is now ready to explode the contemporary city into Junkspace.

[34] R. Koolhaas, 'Beyond Delirious'. The Canadian Architect, 39:1 (January 1994), pp. 28-30.

[35] Ibid

[36] Ibid, p. 30.

[37] Ibid

Busy hollowness

The terrifying characteristic of Rem Koolhaas's text Junkspace,[38] as unstructured as the space it describes, is that in fact this is not a manifesto or a proposal for architecture, but an educated and argumentative acknowledgment of a de facto situation – indeed a cynical look at what is there. Too full, congested with the debris of progress and of so-called civilization, Junkspace is a saturated space where tensions and relations

[38] R. Koolhaas, 'Junkspace' in A.K. Sykes, A. K. (ed.) Constructing a New Agenda. Architectural Theory 1993-2009 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press 2010), pp. 134-151.

are dead, and where the convulsive laughter that shakes differences, collapses pyramids and reactivates space through cycles of composition and decomposition is no longer possible. This is the death of architecture: whatever happens after Junkspace or in Junkspace is no longer architecture. It is death without annihilation. Bataille writes of the dark abyss of existence and of the struggle with nothingness, but Junkspace is the space – the Being, the City, the Architecture – where there is no regenerative void, where the convulsive laughter comes to involve all and everything, until everything, shaking together, in unison and oblivious of differences, comes to a standstill.

What can we draw from this? That architecture needs void, the other, the space of discontinuity across and within which it can constantly renegotiate its position, its relations, and its very being. It is not the void that threatens architecture, but the saturation of space, the proliferation of the everything, the erasure of discontinuities, the killing of distances – the seamlessness of Junkspace. Yet, if 'Junkspace is what remains after modernization has run its course', it is also 'the sum total of our current architecture'.[39] Junkspace

> *substitutes accumulation for hierarchy, addition for composition. ... Junkspace is overripe and undernourishing at the same time, a colossal security blanket that covers the earth in a stranglehold of care ... [fusing] public and private, straight and bent [...] [it offers] a seamless patchwork of the permanently disjointed. Seemingly an apotheosis, spatially grandiose, the effect of its richness is a terminal hollowness, a vicious parody that systematically erodes the credibility of architecture, possibly forever ...*[40]

Continuity is the essence of Junkspace. It 'deploys an infrastructure of seamlessness' and it is 'sealed, held together not by structure, but by skin, like a bubble'. [41] Is this the Labyrinth then, long gone the Pyramid? An 'all interior' whose only recognizable order is its outer skin? A pure space of the experiential? But even experience is killed here, and all is rendered predictable, edited, organized. There is no danger, no surprise, no unknown here – space is filled to its bursting point. What is voided here is the experience, so that there is not only the decomposition of the structured Pyramid but also the meltdown of the experiential Labyrinth, and ultimately the erasure of all that is architecture. [42]

Text as new laughter?

A problem for architecture, Junkspace requires a way forward, a violent shake out of its perpetual and saturated 'state of becoming'[43] that in fact forbids change and criticality. Fredric Jameson has suggested that

[39] R. Koolhaas, 'Junkspace', p. 136.

[40] Ibid, p. 137; emphasis in the original.

[41] Ibid

[42] '[A]lways interior, so extensive that you rarely perceive limits [...] Junkspace is additive, layered and light weight [...] Junkspace always changes, but it never evolves. [...] It is a space of collision, a container of atoms. It is busy, not dense. [...] pretends to unite, but it actually splinters. It creates communities not of shared interest or free association, but of identical statistics, a mosaic of the common denominator.' Ibid, pp. 138-46.

[43] Ibid

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Koolhaas's text, by identifying and 'performing' the very characteristics of Junkspace, is itself a first attempt to break 'out of the windless present of the postmodern back into real historical time'.[44] Interpreting it as a project in words, Jameson considers Koolhaas's text instrumental to the creation of a fundamental discontinuity, a breaking in the urban congestion that is necessary for the possibility of architecture.

> *It is the writing that is the battering ram, the delirious repetition that hammers away at this sameness running through all the forms of our existence [...] and pummels them into admitting their own standardized identity with each other [...]. The sentences are the boom of this repetitive insistence, this pounding on the hollowness of space itself; and their energy now foretells the rush and the fresh air.* [45]

For Jameson, the problem of Junkspace

> *is then how to locate radical difference; how to jumpstart the sense of history so that it begins again to transmit feeble signals of time, of otherness, of change, of Utopia. The problem to be solved is that of breaking out of the windless present of the postmodern back into real historical time, and a history made by human beings.* [46]

Jameson suggests that Koolhaas's text is an attempt to do this by mimicking and exaggerating, in words, the very characteristics of Junkspace, 'until the tendency itself becomes apocalyptic and explodes the world in which we are trapped into innumerable shards and atoms'. [47] The implicit question here is whether Koolhaas's text could be interpreted not as mimicry of Junkspace, but as a parody and a critique of it. The text should therefore be properly assigned to the architectural discourse, as part of a critical practice of architecture that can break into the 'all purpose indeterminate magma'[48] of Junkspace, to make space, that is, make room, produce a new void, and restart the project of architecture in the city. This interpretation has important repercussions not only on the redefinition of the role of architecture in the transformation of the contemporary city, but also towards an understanding of architecture that acknowledges the importance of its discursive practices. For Jameson the Junkspace text both anticipates and produces 'an orgasmic breaking through into time and history again, into a concrete future'.[49] What is fundamental here is that at a moment of physical and formal impasse architecture needs to return to the text, not only as a form of critical reflection on the discipline, but as an 'interior' agent of its practice that can trigger its re-construction. Far from representing and embodying in stone the structure of society, this architecture of the critical post-formal is a 'project' in the sense that it acts as a relational force of change. In this case it is the text that produces a 'void', that space of the difference that makes the project possible, again.

44 F. Jameson 'Future City' in A. K. Sykes (ed.) Constructing a New Agenda. Architectural Theory 1993-2009 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), p. 247.

45 Ibid

46 Ibid, pp. 263-4.

47 Ibid, p 264.

48 Ibid, p 259.

49 Ibid, p 264.

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

This is not an institutional architecture shaken by Bataille's laughter, but a laughter generated within architecture that becomes critical agency in the city, for a post-Junk architecture. As in Eisenman's processes of the 'interstitial' – producing through interference a space that is void and yet full, delineated and yet undefined, formalized and yet relational – a post-Junk architectural space is open, relational, multiple, dense but not full, tensioned but not saturated. Always moving and changing, it is void but not hollow, and ready to be shaken, yet again, by laughter, and to laugh with it.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

PostScript: Urban Blind Spots

Florian Kossak, Tatjana Schneider & Stephen Walker

Blind spots exist in every society, culture, and urban fabric. They can be spatial, social, economic, or policy related. On the one hand, blind spots are typically situations or topics that are obscured by other themes; they fall beyond our radar because they are neither considered topical nor pressing enough to be addressed by policy or planning, or picked up in the media. Blind spots are created by particular ways of seeing, which re-iterate a 'Western' canon of urban history or an urban discourse that focuses on those global, fast growing metropolises that provide us with a high level of imagery, staggering data and socio-spatial extremes. On the other hand, blind spots also describe necessary locations of informality; places and spaces which are overlooked by the authorities, by planning or other users, and thereby allow for indeterminate, unregulated, informal, non-prescribed and open uses.

This is not to suggest that the relative importance or challenge of blind spots is determined by their size, materiality, scale or location. Blind spots also relate to approaches, research and teaching projects, where they play a similar double role, both as a product of obscuration and an opportunity for exploration. Indeed, this double role is inevitable, as blind spots are arguably product and productive of the ways we grasp the world around and beyond us. Accepting the impossibility of the total view, Lewis Mumford noted 'No human eye can take in this metropolitan mass at a glance.'[1] Many thinkers have developed metaphors from the way the eye sees, and applied these to aspects of our broader engagement with the world. Merleau-Ponty, for example, noted that it is the lacunae or 'invisible' within the 'world' that actually generates the possibility of 'vision':

[1] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (San Diego, Harcourt Inc, 1961), p.620.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

> What [blindness, [the] (punctum caecum) of the "consciousness"] does not see is what in it prepares the vision of the rest (as the retina is blind at the point where the fibres that will permit the vision spread out into it)." Whenever we 'look at' something, either literally looking with our eyes or engaging through other capacities of thought and perception, with this process of viewing come blind spots within that process of engagement and exchange.[2]

[2] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible & the Invisible*, Working note [May, 1960] (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1969), p.248.

While Merleau-Ponty's philosophical work was perhaps content to identify the fundamental interconnectedness of blind-spots and vision and its role in our connections with our worlds, his contemporary Georges Bataille not only described the operation of blind spots but also expanded their sphere of application and sought to activate their potential for political ends, revealing and challenging the status quo of power relations. As Marx & Engels consistently pointed out, societies in every epoch see themselves through (and consequently are usually seen through) the ideas that are formed and sustained by the ruling class:

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.[3]

[3] Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1985), p. 64.

Lamenting what he saw as the dominance of hegemonic scientific, functional or ruling-class worldviews, Bataille's interest was drawn to moments when science, functionality or the ruling-class view broke down. He did not simply celebrate instances where non-functional 'gaps' or voids appeared within an apparently functional system. Instead, he considered them to be the blind spot of any functional economy: the moment or location from where it was possible to demonstrate that a particular economy's reliance on what he referred to as a 'general economy' operated beyond any 'system.' In another formulation, Bataille explained this relationship as being similar to that between the festival and everyday life, which while being antagonistic, is also mutually reinforcing:

> Festival is the negation of actions, but it is the negation that provides a SENSE for actions (as death provides a sense for life).[4]

[4] Georges Bataille, "Plan", (OC, 2:388), in Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille*, translated by Betsy Wing (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), p.97.

However apparently unassailable, however impermeable any particular discourse might seem, reaching its blind spot could reveal the reliance of that economy on others, and demand that we acknowledge its contingency. The potential political importance of such a move is significant, for it demonstrates that things could be otherwise.

Even when we actively and intently see a place, if it is apparently not a blind spot, it could still, unknowingly, represent a blind spot for us, as we are not able to gauge its true meaning. Referring to Henri Lefebvre's concept of the trialectics of spatiality[5] which identifies perceived, conceived and lived space, we, as professionals, will inevitably operate mostly with and in the first one, the perceived space, the physical space. It is a space that can easily be represented, measured, planed, or altered. And yet without an understanding of the conceived and lived space we will fail to read this space in its full social and symbolic meaning. The Urban Blind Spots will be right in front of us.

5 See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). For an expanded reading of Lefebvre's notion of trialectics see Edward. W Soja, *Thirdspace; Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

But again, in order to detect, experience, and represent these spaces we will have to alter our ways of seeing urban spaces, of engaging with urban spaces, and of documenting these urban spaces. We need other techniques of seeing, other lenses, other tools of recording. In order to engage with Urban Blind Spots we need look beyond the conventional approaches of architectural and urban history in order to value and champion other ways of surveying and of accounting for cities; ways that aim at transforming the tools with which both citizens and architects might understand cities. In this sense, blind spots refer to different perceptive and representational methods through which urban conditions can be described. Italo Calvino has already reminded us in Invisible Cities that something as complex as a city can sustain multiple viewings through different lenses: it can be read again and again, understood in different ways, each reading not necessarily more or less valid then the next.

6

This also leads us to a consequential shift, as we have to ask who can tell of blind spots. It suggests a move away from the singular authoritative position of the researcher or writer to a pluralistic one that is both personal and multiple. It is the tendency for any intellectual discipline —especially those that are developed alongside a professional discipline—to aim for the authoritative position that delineates it from those outside this discipline, the non-expert, the amateur, the other.[6] It establishes a position of power, the power of defining what is important and what isn't, what has value and what hasn't, what our understanding of the world, and of cities for that matter, is supposed to be. As Bataille suggests, to identify, celebrate, mobilise, and even simply to communicate existing blind spots is to challenge authority by undermining its assumed singularity.

6 For an analysis of the development of the 'expert' and its problematics see for example Magali Sarfatti Larson, The Rise of Professionalism : A Sociological Analysis (London: University of California Press, 1977).

Architecture as a discipline and profession tends to stick to a rather narrow, self-perpetuating and self-serving definition of cities. Architecture

also tends to see its remit as physicalities, it tends to privilege certain understandings or morphologies of physicality (we might refer to these as 'proper' architecture) at the expense of others. This can all be found in the so-called standards of architectural and urban history.[7] What it is most lacking in these accounts is attention to what Virilio calls the 'integral accident', the unplanned, that is inherently, but mostly involuntarily, the flip side of all carefully designed objects, spaces, or cities.[8] The train accident at the Gare Montparnasse in 1895, where a steam locomotive burst through the station's front façade and dropped one floor down onto the street, was not part of the city's definition, it wasn't deliberately planned. Yet it happened and it happened because someone had planned a station, because someone had designed a steam locomotive. Without them, the accident wouldn't have taken place and wouldn't have become part of the city's history. In that respect, the widely reproduced historic photograph of this tragi-comical accident tells us as much about what cities are about as, for instance, the complex yet abstract map of the Tokyo metro system.

Looking at and understanding the integral accident – as one expression of a blind spot—is thus important if we are to develop and find strategies to 'preserve' its notion in a world that is fundamentally driven towards the suppression of such instances. But what happens when we 'preserve' them and, more, define them as 'positive' instances? How are they developed and how do they come into being?

The 1973 project *Reality Properties: Fake Estates* by Gordon Matta-Clark works with the accidents produced by a 'functional' system.[9] Matta-Clark's curiosity opens up architecture and reveals it to be underwritten by non-architecture (what he referred to elsewhere as 'anarchitecture'), by a non-functional gap or metaphoric void which, when viewed from within the closed system of architecture, cannot be understood as belonging to the same system. This non-functional use is considered by Bataille to be the blind spot of any functional economy, the unseen heterogeneity that underwrites any economy of homogeneity.

So, is Matta-Clark's tactical working with the gap transferable to an 'other' or 'otherwise' understanding of space? How can we use this understanding to refine our design and planning strategies in a way that can facilitate or accommodate urban blind spots, or blind spots in general? Or is this simply impossible by their very nature and definition? Can one design an accident?

We observe how traditionally, the tools of both historical urban analysis and of urban design have been similar. (That is to say, the same techniques of epistemology and projection have been run without problem backwards and forwards). Mining this apparent procedural continuum, we argue that something of a disciplinary blind spot can be revealed when such

7 See for example: Francis D K Ching, *Architecture: Form, Space, and Order* (John Wiley & Sons, 2007); William J R Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (London: Phaidon, 1996); Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007); Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Harvard, 2009); John Summerson, *The Classical Language of Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980).

8 See for instance Paul Virilio *The Original Accident* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007)

9 See Gordon Matta-Clark, in an interview with Liza Bear in Avalanche, December 1974, p.34.

techniques are challenged. Such techniques are usually formal, they are beholden to architectural tendencies that favour abstraction: the grid or axis, building typology, centre–periphery, transport network, and so on. As Lefebvre amongst others has pointed out, this drive for abstraction does not relate to our ordinary experience of cities, nor does it actually successfully attain abstraction.[10]

These techniques are also historically linear, chronological and historically delimited and the 'Standards' are reliant on these traditional modes of architectural representation: the plan drawing, aerial perspective, the finished (usually civic) building. They are concerned with containers. The 'whole' city is frequently shown and understood as a discrete whole: the whole can be further sub-divided into discrete sub-wholes as retrospectively understood or projected urban planning zones (Central Business District, Civic or Downtown, Residential, Industrial, all of which are disconnected from some great outside—the rural, or nature). All these containers, or objects, are static not dynamic, unable to register flow (people, materials, energy, language, goods, plants and animals, germs),—Lefebvre's perceived space.

The 'Standards' are driven from the singular to the general: many of them explicitly move from the study of particular cities towards the divination of universal rules, typified in Arthur Korn's 'general laws', where he stated:

> Each town has a personality due to geographical or other natural influences; but as well as this personal 'accidental' character each town is the result of the social and economic forces of a distinct historical period. The most elementary way to study a town is to see it as an individual specimen. Everybody is aware of this method. The next stage is to classify it as a historical type; as for instance a mediaeval town, a renaissance town, or a great modern city. The last stage is to see it as a product of general laws which apply to towns of all types and periods.[11]

Many 'Standards' of urban histories establish similarly clear phases as morphological rings of city growth. Moreover, this kind of urban history ends at a certain date, such that history is contained in the past. Specific cities are linked to certain ('golden') periods, and are shown at their 'best' or most important moment, and are thus denied a (prior) past or an afterlife. They set out to tell history 'the way it really was'. This raises questions regarding the status of evidence and extant material; think no further than the famous Rome tablet which claims comprehensive knowledge of that city but is composed only of fragments. But with the 'Standards', by definition, everything that doesn't fit in to this standardisation is left out or overlooked, and creates blind spots on various levels.

[10] 'Abstract space…is not in fact defined on the basis of what is perceived. Its abstraction has nothing simple about it: it is not transparent and cannot be reduced either to a logic or to a strategy. Coinciding neither with the abstraction of the sign, not with that of the concept, it operates negatively.' and 'Abstract space is not homogeneous; it simply has homogeneity as its goal, its orientation, its 'lens.'' Henri Lefebvre on Abstract Space, from *The Production of Space*, op.cit. p.50, p.287.

[11] Arthur Korn, *History Builds the Town* (London: Lund Humphries, 1953), p.3.

Finally, most of the 'Standards' are discipline-specific and 'Western-centric'. So called 'global' surveys of urban history map directly onto the history of European colonisation: in Banister Fletcher, Pevsner, and Summerson, for example, South-American, Persian and Indian histories— accounted for or retold as the extended stories of European Cities— feature larger than East Asian or Chinese examples. As Marx observed more broadly, this tendency to appropriation runs through history, written all too often according to the terms of the powerful:

> In actual history, it is a notorious fact that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, in short force, play the greatest part... and this history... is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire.[12]

[12] Marx, *Capital Volume I* (Penguin: London, 1976), p. 874.

There is a close connection between the received 'tools' of urban analysis (which are themselves culturally defined from a European tradition), and the establishment and maintenance of the linear narrative and received hierarchies of urban development as these are usually portrayed in a traditional architectural and urban history. However, these tools are not applicable on cities such as Lagos, Tokyo, Mumbai or Las Vegas, or for looking at informal settlements that house a large part of the world's population. This has and still does lead to obvious blind spots in our urban histories and the general discourse of architecture and urbanism. To understand these cities, other histories and techniques are needed if we are to begin to account for these places. In turn, these techniques can broaden our awareness and understanding of what Michel de Certeau calls the 'opaque and stubborn places' within Western cities that make up the canon of urban history. By examining the 'imbricated strata' of Rome, as one example of the opaque and stubborn places he finds '[t]he revolutions of history, economic mutations, demographic mixtures lie in layers within it and remain there hidden in customs, rites and spatial practices.'[13]

[13] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, tr. Steven Rendall, (California: Universty of California Press), .p. 200 and p.201.

The technique, or tool, through which Michel de Certeau gets to these places is walking, which he valorises in opposition to the view from above. He contrasts geometric, geographic readings with the 'opaque and blind mobility' of the citizen whose walking 'creates within the planned city a "metaphorical or mobile city".'[14] Acknowledging this kind of challenge, philosopher Jacques Derrida picks up on the heterogeneity of space, action, and movement, and notes the role that this offers the body.

[14] ibid, p.110.

> [In the architecture of the event] opportunity [for chance, formal invention, combinatory transformation, wandering] is ... given ... to whoever engages ... in architectural writing: without reservation, which implies an inventive reading, the restlessness of a whole culture and the body's signature. This bodywould no longer simply be content to walk, circulate, stroll around in a place or on paths, but would transform its elementary motions by giving rise to them; it would receive from this other spacing the invention of its gestures.[15]

[15] Jacques Derrida, "Point de Folie" in Bernard Tscumi, *La Case Vide: La Villette 1985* (London: Architectural Association, 1985), §10.

The architecture of the eventthat Derrida theorises in response to the architectural practices of Bernard Tschumi invites an inventive reading, where a 'whole culture' and the reader's bodyare taken as dimensions. Reading architecture is not achieved by rote, but rather it is an activity that constitutes the reader as much as the architectural work. This reciprocal constituting sets the limits of body and world—reader and architecture—for that interpretation only, rather than falling back on accepted discourse or ideas of the ruling-class ideas (if we return to the formulation of Marx & Engels).

In different contexts, both Derrida and Tschumi note that there is something central to architecture that allows it to be *taken for nature, for common sense itself*.[16] The way we 'use' architecture, its ability to become the background to our everyday lives and thus fall into our blind spot, can grant it a pseudo-naturality, but also constitutes the possibility of a generative reading: that architecture is in continual use presents the opportunity for this different reading. In this respect, function could be taken as architecture's blind spot - function here exceeding the control or projection of the architect or urban designer.

[16] ibid.

For all the wealth of surprises that can emerge from this particular blind spot, it is important to stress that within such readings no final synthesis is reached; if we describe this as a dialectic, it is one that remains in play. The political importance of this can be highlighted in the growing concern voiced by urban theorists regarding the increasing difficulty of attaining a legible landscape view of many large modern cities. While legibility has historically been sought by authority as a means of establishing and maintaining control over citizens and territory —control that has been disrupted through tactics of developing alternate views— the increasing invisibility of power is accompanied by an increasing illegibility of urban borders. Fredrick Jameson articulates his worry that effective political agency and action is caught up in changing urban legibility: 'The incapacity to map socially is as crippling to political experience as the analogous incapacity to map spatially is for urban experience.'[17]

[17] Fredrick Jamerson's 'Cognitive Mapping' (in Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, 1988) p.353.

In the oft-reproduced Naked City map, incorporating the blind spot of homogenous discourse, the "renovated cartography"[18] of the map counters

[18] Guy Debord, "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography", in Ken Knabb (ed), *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p.5.

the traditional Cartesian cartography of the Plan de Paris; narration counters description, interlocution counters monologue, and movement (the spatialising actions of the SI dérive) counters knowledge.

> The Paris of the Plan exists in a timeless present; this timelessness is imagined spatially in the map's (illusory) total revelation of its object. That is, users of the map see the entire city laid out before their eyes. However, such an omnipresent view is seen from nowhere.[19]

[19] Thomas F McDonough, 'Situationist Space'.,October, Vol. 67 (Winter, 1994), p.64.

For Bataille, the possibility of this omnipresent view depends upon the blind spot of scientific discourse; recognition that the authority and dominance of this discourse is founded on a gap, that in fact it is without foundation and is reliant upon a first order heterogeneous discourse would reveal this 'total revelation' as illusory. However, as Hollier notes, mapping as total revelation in a timeless present is not possible: 'The labyrinth we discuss cannot be described. Mapping is out of the question. Or, if it is described, it will be like the trajectory described by a mobile; not described as an object but as a traversal.'[20]

[20] Hollier, op.cit., p.58.

Further trajectories

Looking at and understanding Urban Blind Spots seems ever more important if we are to find and develop strategies that highlight and treasure their existence in a world that is fundamentally driven towards the suppression of blind spots. This refers not only to the 'contingent spaces' of the city as Iris Murdoch coined them: 'industrial estates, rubbish tips, suburbia, railway sidings, dead ends and wastelands, as oppositional to the 'necessary' parts of the urban centre such as the law courts, royal parks and sophisticated shopping malls.'[21] More fundamentally, it is probably about the ambition (and illusion) of control, that age-old architectural disease, which is challenged through the notion of blind spots. Shifting focus onto blind spots allows us to see and valorise uncertainty and indeterminacy. It allows us to critically review the increasing levels of control that are being exerted over the process of construction and occupation, or to understand the overwhelming tendency to reduce risk and the accidental. Seeing blind spots helps us champion diverse mono-use. Yet we also have to be quick on our feet, as the flowers that grow in blind spots are fast recuperated, appropriated into mainstream discourse and practice, which often takes away their potency as a tactic of and for 'other' spaces. Despite this, our hope is that the more attempts are made to eradicate Urban Blind Spots, the more they will spring up elsewhere.

[21] see Judith Rugg, *Exploring Site Specific Art* (London: I B Tauris, 2010), p.22.

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Notes on Contributors

Gary Boyd is a Senior Lecturer in Architecture at Queens University Belfast. His first book, *Dublin 1745–1922: Hospitals, Spectacle and Vice* (Four Courts, 2006) examines connections between medical institutions and the city's urban and social development. Currentresearch activities include systems, military and manufactured landscapes, and housing design and its histories. He is co-editor of *Ordnance: War + Architecture & Space* (Ashgate, 2013)

Hélène Frichot is an Assistant Professor in Critical Studies in Architecture, School of Architecture and the Built Environment, KTH, Stockholm. While her first discipline is architecture she completed a PhD in Philosophy at the University of Sydney (2004). Hélène edited, with Stephen Loo, Deleuze and Architecture (Edinburgh University Press, 2013). Since 2005, with Esther Anatolitis, she has co-curated the public lecture series Architecture + Philosophy [www.architecture.testpattern.com.au/]

Bernd Kniess is the Dean of Urban Design at HafenCity Universität in Hamburg. The project Universität der Nachbarschaften [UdN] is a collaboration between the HafenCity Universität Hamburg [HCU], the International Building Exhibition Hamburg [IBA] and Kampangel Internationale Kulturfabrik. It is sponsored by Max Hoffmann GmbH & Co. KG.

Florian Kossak is a senior lecturer at the University of Sheffield School of Architecture where he lectures Urban history, theory, and design and is Director of Postgraduate Taught Masters Programmes. He got his doctorate from the Edinburgh College of Art with a PhD thesis on experimental architectural exhibitions. He has previously taught in Munich and Glasgow and practiced in Germany and the UK with a focus on exhibition curating and design. He was a founder member of the worker's cooperative G.L.A.S. (Glasgow Letters on Architecture and Space). Publications include several authored and (co)edited books and exhibition catalogues. Current work includes research into urban histories

and the praxis of experimental architecture exhibitions. He is a co-founder and member of the research center *Agency*.

Marián Potočár was born in Bratislava, and studied architecture and urbanism on the Faculty of Architecture on Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava and Technische Universität Dortmund. After earning of his engineers degree in 2010, he was occupied with research on architectures of totalitarian regimes of the 20th Century, which was main topic of his doctoral dissertation (defended in 2014) and international research project ATRIUM on which he participated. Marián currently lives in Vienna, where he works as Architect at ATP Architekten Ingenieure and occasional Architectural guide at Guiding Architects Network.

Francesco Sebregondi is an architect and a graduate from the Centre for Research Architecture (Goldsmiths). He studied in Paris, Rome and London. Driven by a search for alternative practices of architecture, his research addresses the margins of contemporary cities, the role of architecture as media, and the politics of ruins. In 2011, he published *The Event of the Void: Architecture and Politics in the Evacuated Heygate Estate*.

Tatjana Schneider is a senior lecturer at the University of Sheffield School of Architecture. Her research focuses on the social, economic and political context of architecture and is conducted through multiple methods including actions and installations, the design of and participation in exhibitions, funded projects and writing. He is a co-founder and member of the research center Agency which functions as an umbrella for research activities related to transformational research into architectural education and practice, and is co-author of *Spatial Agency* (2011) and *Flexible Housing* (2007) aw well as co-editor of *Agency: Working with Uncertain Architectures* (2009).

Teresa Stoppani is Professor of Architecture and Head of the Leeds School of Architecture. She has taught architectural design and theory at teh IUAV Venice, the Architectural Association London, the University of Greenwich, RMIT University Melbourne and the University of Technology Sydney. Her research interests are the relationship between architecture, theory and the design processin the urban environment, and the influence on the specifically architectural aspects of other spatial and critical practices.

Stephen Walker is a reader in Architecture at the University of Sheffield School of Architecture where he lectures in history and theory, and directs Graduate School. Trained as an architect, he worked for architectural and design practices in London and Madrid. Since returning to the UK, he taught in the Faculty of Art and Design, Nottingham Trent University, before moving to the University of Sheffield. He has written widely on

architectural and artistic practice, combining critical theory with a broad range of practical work including Mediaeval Breton architecture, ring-roads and the work of contemporary artists, in particular Gordon Matta-Clark and Helen Chadwick. More recently, he has been developing a project on the architecture of travelling street fairs and fairgrounds, with support from the RIBA Research Trust. He is a co-founder and member of the research center *Agency*.

field:
a free journal for architecture

www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

ISSN: 1755-068
www.field-journal.org
vol.6 (1)

Editors

Editorial and review collective

Design

Contact

For all enquiries, submissions and comments please contact:

field@sheffield.ac.uk

field:
School of Architecture
Arts Tower Western Bank
Sheffield S10 2TN