Conference:
THE MEDIATED CITY
50 Years in the Global Village
The MEDIATED CITY – Smart Cities – Political Cities

INTRODUCTION

This publication is the product of the conference The Mediated City – 50 Years in the Global Village held in Los Angeles. Organised by the international research group AMPS, its scholarly journal Architecture_MPS and hosted by Woodbury University, it offered a platform for multiple and diverse examinations of the city and took as its starting point the 50th anniversary of the publication of Marshal McLuhan’s Understanding Media. As with all the events in this series, it brought together people from diverse backgrounds to fragment, multiply and reconfigure our readings of the city; to offer multiple and conflicting discipline perspectives. The intention was to share views of the city as physical entity, online community, film set, photographic backdrop, geographical map, sociological case study, political metaphor, digital or video game etc. to examine it as a mediated and shared phenomenon.

The publication, and the conference which it documents, both form part of the broader Mediated City research programme run by AMPS which is headlined by a special Mediated City book series with Intellect Books. The series editor of both the Intellect series and this conference based series is Dr Graham Cairns. The papers collated in this volume represent a sample of the research discussed and explored at the Los Angeles event into the contemporary city in the digital age.
THE MEDIATED CITY – 50 Years in the Global Village

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FACTORY NOSTALGIA: INDUSTRIAL AESTHETICS IN THE DIGITAL CITY

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INTRODUCTION:

Standing here, you are at the centre of a quiet but fundamental shift in the workings of Kitchener's economy. Let your imagination wander back to a time when Kitchener was an industrial powerhouse, shipping goods around the world: leather products, furniture, buttons, luggage, felt, rubber boots, hockey skates, tires, televisions sets ... Perhaps you can hear the sound of the plants clustered along this strip, cranking out their daily quotas.

Notes from industrial walking tour of Kitchener, Ontario.¹

While environments as such have a strange power to elude perception, the preceding ones acquire an almost nostalgic fascination when surrounded by the new.

Marshall McLuhan²

Material Cities/ Symbolic Cities

Cities are material and symbolic entities. Cities are built and re-built. Office towers and condominiums sprout up in former industrial sites, spurred by foreign and local investment. Roads and pipes – the city’s material infrastructure – age and crack and are repaired, upgraded, or in some cases, left to decay for lack of finances or political will. Cities are more than just matter, however, but are symbolic as well, occupying the private and collective imaginaries of citizens. They are image-symbols and increasingly, identifiable and marketable brands. As former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg famously put it, Manhattan is a high-end luxury product.³ In Kevin Lynch’s 1960 book The Image of the City, he argues that the city is not a thing itself, but an object of collective perception, a product of “being perceived by its inhabitants.”⁴ The city produces “imageability:” the quality in a physical object that renders the object memorable and notable in the mind of the viewer.⁵ The idea of the city as image has been echoed elsewhere. Michel de Certeau famously described Manhattan from the perch of the World Trade Centre, noting the way that the city comes to view as a coherent object from above. The height “makes the complexity of the city readable, and immobilizes its opaque mobility in a transparent text.”⁶

For de Certeau, viewing the city from above provides an imaginary anchor making the city legible as a concrete image that presents the fiction of seeing and knowing the city like a “voyeur-god.” More recently, Janine Marchessault and Michael Darroch argue that even though cities are not images, “they are images before they are cities.”⁷ Images and metaphors of cities, therefore, are crucial in shaping the material life of cities. Ben Highmore makes a similar claim arguing that the metaphors we use to imagine cities are not “a poetic substitute to a more fundamental reality, or a veil of symbolism that we can poke through to get to a real reality behind it, but [are] part of the material stuff constituting the real city.”⁸ Metaphors become material in Highmore’s formulation. This is evident in the circulation of global city
brands that serve as models for design in other cities: “New York style lofts” are advertised in Berlin, South Beach condominiums are promoted without irony in Toronto, and most dramatically, replicas of famous European towns and cities are rapidly built in China. Nearly seventy years after the first planned suburbs in Levittown, New York and the realization of the economic and environmental costs of urban sprawl, images of nature, the country, and the fantasy of a less hurried life continue to drive the suburban expansion of cities. Images and symbols thus drive much of the material life of cities but they also give us clues to the psychology of cities. A city’s insecurity with itself may drive the appeal to model itself on more robust global icons, or to puff up its own local histories and landmarks, or build towering skyscrapers to compete in an increasingly competitive marketplace of cities. Examining the prominent images and metaphors can thus be a way of mapping the history and future of cities.

My concern in this paper is with the industrial as a symbolic motif in design strategies for urban renewal projects. In a number of cities across Europe and North America, now-defunct manufacturing sites and industrial areas in cities have been re-imagined as trendy live and workspaces. In many cases, these former industrial hubs house workspaces and workers in the post-industrial or information economy. While there is a global dimension to the industrial image in new urban design, my particular focus here is on the Canadian cities of Kitchener-Waterloo. The small “twin cities” are interesting case studies as they have recently shifted from an industrial economy to a predominantly post-industrial, information economy and have endeavored to further expand their digital and high-tech industries. Amidst this transition, the two cities have taken significant steps to re-appropriate former industrial sites for the projected new media enterprises and start-up companies. Within many new urban design projects, the industrial history and aesthetics of these former spaces has been stressed in graphic and nostalgic ways. The industrial thus serves as an important symbol in the construction of the post-industrial or digital city envisioned by planners and politicians.

**Industrial Aesthetics and Commodified “Grit”**

By using the term industrial aesthetic, I refer primarily to the appropriation of former sites of industrial manufacturing within contemporary urban architecture and design. In many cases across the globe, former factories have been re-made in various ways that preserve the outer or inner structure of the building, making the building’s former history a prominent part of the building’s new identity. This industrial aesthetic recalls what Christine Boyer refers to as the Machine City, the motifs of industrial design that emerged in late nineteenth and early twentieth century modernity, and which are “ingrained in the way we represent and imagine (or have represented and imagined) the modern city.” Aesthetic elements of the Machine City are closely wed to industrialism, most vividly depicted in a number modernist films in the 1920s and 1930s such as Modern Times (Chaplin, 1936), Man with a Movie Camera (Vertov, 1929), and Berlin: Symphony of a Great City (Ruttman, 1927). These films feature key elements of the industrial aesthetic, namely, a focus on the machines, gears, and technology of modern industrial manufacturing. (Figure 1). While there have been some creative re-appropriations of industrial spaces in the contemporary period such as mixed-use art spaces and community centers, many re-designs are driven by large-scale capital investment from residential and commercial real estate developers. In many cases, the building’s manufacturing history is explicitly highlighted in the re-design, such as in the name of the building or in graphic lettering on the façade. In Toronto for example, a number of condominiums in former industrial areas of the city proudly bear the name of the product made at the site, such as The Candy Factory Lofts or The Feather Factory.
The transformation of older industrial spaces into trendy lofts is not without historical precedent. Sharon Zukin argues that the conversion of defunct factories into lofts in New York City began in the 1970s and was seen as a way to bring capital investment and residents back to neglected parts of the downtown core. This materialized primarily in the building of the now-ubiquitous urban loft that preserved a number of aesthetic elements of the former industrial space: exposed brick and beams, high ceilings, and open-concept units. The reception among many architecture critics at the time was positive: “Industry was dead; long live loft living – in its space.”

Zukin argues that there was an important aesthetic component to the appeal of loft living. She notes that the timing of this design strategy was crucial since the sweatshops that existed in many of the buildings before certainly did not carry “romantic” associations while in use. The appeal of the industrial as aesthetic motif or image in the loft era, however, was directly tied connected to the manufacturing and squatter history of these spaces.

On the one hand, artists’ living habits became a cultural model for the middle class. On the other hand, old factories became a means of expression for a “post-industrial” civilization. A heightened sense of art and history, space and time, was dramatized by the trend-setting media.

For Zukin, the industrial aesthetic became particularly attractive for professionals in the post-industrial workforce and served, ironically, as an icon of post-industrial society. Andrew Ross makes a similar claim about the conversion of former industrial spaces into high tech workplaces in the 1990s. He argues that the city, and in particular, the gritty industrial spaces that previously signified poverty and blight emerged as new signs of “urban chic” for workers in high-tech and new media. The gritty aesthetic of former factories was linked to a bohemian squatter-artist identity that, as Ross claims, helped to justify the blurring of work-leisure boundaries in new media labor. The aesthetics of the industrial age thus became nostalgia-commodities for the new economy, fashionable icons for workers in the information economy.

**Dead Industry, New Media: Some Canadian Case Studies**
In Canada there has been a close link between the development and promotion of new media companies and the re-appropriation of former industrial spaces. Indeed, the re-use of industrial urban space in Canada seems to express the desire for a post-industrial civilization articulated by Zukin. A number of new media companies have appropriated former industrial sites, encouraged by large financial incentives from government and serve as catalysts for broader re-development and employment in the area. For example, the French gaming company Ubisoft was encouraged to open their North American headquarters in a former textile plant in the late 1990s in Montreal. (Figure 2). This was facilitated by large tax breaks and labor subsidies that contributed both to the success of Ubisoft and the rapid gentrification of the neighborhood. Similarly, the provincial government in Ontario offered Ubisoft two hundred and sixty million dollars to open a studio in a former industrial neighborhood in Toronto, while critics in Vancouver have hailed the growing videogame industry for reclaiming neglected industrial spaces and contributing to neighborhood diversity. In all of these cases the former grit of the industrial neighborhoods of the downtown is an important selling point for local governments looking to lure international high-tech companies to underdeveloped areas in the urban core.

This link between the industrial and the high tech is notable in the small cities of Kitchener-Waterloo, about an hour west of Toronto. Kitchener, historically more working-class than its sister-city, Waterloo, has recently worked hard to promote high tech and digital industries to replace now-departed manufacturing industries such as Bauer, Electrohome, Uniroyal, and BF Goodrich. The local governments of both cities led aggressive campaigns to re-brand the region as a high-tech innovation hub referred to locally as “Canada’s Technology Triangle.” One of the central areas under development is a former industrial area in the downtown core that has been recently dubbed the Warehouse or Innovation District. Employing the rhetoric of the “creative city” made popular by Richard Florida, the city of Kitchener has developed an economic strategy that aims to recruit young “creative types” to a regenerated and trendy downtown. According to a city document, “[W]e are rebranding and fostering the Warehouse District as one of the province’s premier multi-disciplinary centers of innovation, with the potential to accommodate as many as 19,000 more dreamers and doers.” The centerpiece of the re-development of the downtown is the Tannery Block, a former tanning factory that dates from 1849. (Figure 3). This building houses a number of established new media companies such as the Canadian headquarters of Google, as well as a number of other start-ups. One of the most important tenants in the building is Communitech, a non-profit technology incubator with close ties to the University of Waterloo. Indeed, this seems to be a major incentive for Google’s presence here, as it can benefit from being close to some of the better start-ups energy and engineering talent form the university community.
The building emphasizes the area’s industrial history through a number of icons. The original font of the Tanning Company has been restored on the building’s side and it features exposed brick as well as industrial relics displayed prominently in the main atrium. (Figure 4). The history of the building is also evident in the marketing language used by the building’s developers. Similar to the lofts described by Zukin, the aesthetics of the building are key aspects of its appeal. The developer describes the building as a “retro-trendy” space that features hardwood and exposed brick. 24 This “retro-trendy” discourse is mirrored by an appeal to “creative” professional workers lured by these spatial aesthetics. The ideal tenants would be “designers, lawyers or accountants -- people who want funky office space, people who have interesting retail space.” 25 The developers also emphasize that the re-development would work to recover the spirit of the space by clearing it up of disrepair and junk and unlock “its inner beauty.” In this discourse, the building’s industrial charms are revealed through a kind of selective archaeology. Isolated material remains of the space are re-situated and re-imagined as aesthetic and historical objects that constitute the new and revitalized atmosphere for working professionals and their clients.
Industrial Symbols, Digital Futures

There is a close link in these projects between the imagined glory of now-dead industry and the hopes for a renewed urban core rooted in a post-industrial, digital economy. Near the Tannery Building is another large-scale renovation project currently taking place in what was a former rubber factory. Known as the Breithaupt Block, the project promises to be a unique work and live that will be a “centre for innovation and creativity a full city block in size” (Figure 4). On the developer’s website, the former rubber building is marketed as a future site for similar start-ups and tech companies. One of the notable discursive features about the ad for the Breithaupt building is its confluence or history and futurism: it celebrates the industrial history of the space at the same time that it projects the future of work in a post-industrial city. The building’s logo features its slogan: “the evolution of the workplace” at the same time as it features a decidedly “retro” font with the words “established in 1904” written underneath. As a visual text, the logo capitalizes on two different temporalities: the industrial history of the space, here re-worked through the lens of nostalgia, and the envisioning of a post-industrial work, described here through the imagined evolution of work and the heavily sought-after “creative types.” Again, the industrial and the post-industrial are closely wed, imagined as part of the same urban evolutionary process.

For many local city councilors, the industrial re-design of Kitchener-Waterloo is seen as a primary means of regenerating the downtown core. New media and high tech companies are key elements in the regeneration of both local economy and former industrial centers. This is reflected in the discourse around these projects that stress the role of new creative workers and enterprises, since the lure of “creative” professionals is a key feature for success in the information age. For instance, the Breithaupt Block advertises its space as “creative space for creative people.” Supporters of these projects see the promise of new economic growth, the retention and attraction of young workers, and the renewal of the urban core. Former industries are important materially and symbolically within this envisioned transformation to a post-industrial economy. The renovation of former industrial spaces mark a material change in what were formerly neglected regions of the city and thus represent newly infused spaces of capital within the city. They also profit symbolically from the former energy and economic strength of the region’s industrial “golden age.” This represents a nostalgic and sanitized version of local industrial history that eschews the consequences of these forces: environmental pollution, worker injuries and bodily toll, and the increasing mobility of global capital that precipitated their flight from the region. In spite of these issues, the region’s industrial past is imagined as a robust economic force, whose spirit is transferred to the hoped-for digital...
economy. This is evident in a local industrial walking tour that invites visitors to imagine Kitchener’s former role in the global economy when it was “an industrial powerhouse shipping goods around the world.” The industrial and post-industrial are closely linked here: the presence of Google and other new media companies promise to return the region to increased global relevance and local prosperity.

These new urban design projects may also seen as forms of “commodified grit” similar to processes of gentrification in other global cities. From this angle, the industrial motifs are merely examples of current trends or fashions in urban marketing and design, trends that contribute to a “consumable” image of place and space within the city. We can broaden this to include revitalized parks like the High Line in Manhattan that also play on the nostalgia of a bygone era of iron and steel. It is important to note that these spaces are not oriented to working class people who populate the symbolic landscape of these spaces, but at upwardly mobile professionals in the creative industries. Working class places are thus re-imaged as consumable motifs for the post-industrial workforce. As Marc Augé claims, these spaces are “non-places” because they have been emptied of their authentic rhythms and culture and are instead sites of nostalgia and mediation for tourists and locals alike.

The City Through a Rear-View Mirror

McLuhan’s theories of media and culture offer another insight into the emergence of these hybrid industrial/post-industrial urban spaces. For McLuhan, the technological present is disorienting and difficult to apprehend. For this reason, we often apply lenses from the past to make the present legible: “We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future.” McLuhan was deeply concerned with the changing sensory conditions of electronically mediated life and the increasingly mediated city. In this way, he shares concerns with earlier urban theorists such as Baudelaire, Benjamin, and Simmel, all of whom were concerned with the radical re-ordering of the senses within technological modernity. The obsolescent past becomes an important way-finding map for a culture undergoing technological and economic transformation. From this angle, the industrial aesthetic can be seen as a nostalgic form of design that recalls a vision of the industrial city rapidly giving way to the digital city, a city that is increasingly mediated through ubiquitous digital technologies.

The industrial as an aesthetic form recalls not only a powerful economic force, but also robust material and bodily forms currently on the decline in the digital age. Steel, iron and manual labor give way to plastics, silicon, and screen based interfaces, and immaterial labor. Local production and processing facilities give way to global manufacturing circuits. As North Americans become increasingly disconnected from the sites and spaces of large-scale manufacturing, industrial aesthetics in contemporary design recall an era with more integrated proximity between labor, product and city. This seems to be the desire at heart in these new development project: to shrink the distances and mediations that currently make-up the global manufacturing economy and create new and intensified work/live clusters. These buildings occupy an intriguing space in the digital city: nostalgically recalling the materiality of the industrial age - the iron machines, the bodily labor and sweat - at the same time as they embody the aspirations for a post-industrial: the technological wonder and economic promises of smart applications and new media software. Within this transformation, the industrial is not wholly obsolesced by the digital but returns in aesthetic form. Obsolescence, as McLuhan wisely noted, “is not the end of anything; it’s the beginning of aesthetics.”

REFERENCES
1 “Made in Kitchener: Personal Stories from our Industrial Past,” Walking tour guide, City of Kitchener, 2012, WWW.KITCHENER.CA/PUBLICART


5 Ibid, 9.


13 Three global examples of former industrial spaces that have been re-appropriated as art studios, exhibition halls, and/or non-profit enterprises include 401 Richmond Street in Toronto, Centquatre in Paris, and the 798 art district in Beijing.


15 Ibid, 15.


20 http://www.techtria


25 Ibid.


INTERROGATING AFRICAN DIASPORA MEDIA: THE CHANGING ROLE OF MEDIA IN A NETWORKED WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

The events known as “The Arab Spring” took centre stage when a Tunisian man set fire to himself in order to protest his harassment at the hands of a local official. Social media brought this action and the protests which followed around the Arab world to the global community. This is one of the powers of social media. It enables individuals to empower themselves to take control of stories and, ultimately, a sense of identity for themselves and others. It has long been surmised that Africa doesn’t play much of a role in the social media community due to extreme poverty and lack of resources. But, more recently, Africa has joined the international community of digital media. Bringing computers, mobile phones and other digital technologies to the African people has forever altered the relationship between the people and the media, just as it has in other countries around the world. Africans are just beginning to realize their potential in the use of this media. They will, of course, be influenced by their own cultural values, norms, rituals, and beliefs. Social media may be used differently in Africa and for different purposes. However, many recent examples demonstrate the possibility that the virtual city of interconnected online participants represents a new type of civic environment which transcends and impacts the physical city. This paper will explore the ways in which Africans use digital media for political purposes, in the composition of public online discourses and in the patterns of communicative interactions.

The continent of Africa has long endured crushing poverty, unstable political regimes and even genocide (Darfur). Still, it continues to rebound and has more recently joined the online, international discourse via social media. The ways in which African peoples use social media and the Internet are reflective of the cultures within the larger geographical space. They cannot be expected to communicate in the same ways as North Americans, Europeans, Latin Americans, Australians, or Middle Easterners due to the unique nature of African modes of discourse and cultural context. Furthermore, Africa has suffered a long history of colonialism by European powers which have attempted to diminish and marginalize African identity. Africans have begun to reinvent themselves by using the new social media to help define themselves to the outside world and describe their own communication needs.

The ways in which the world communicates has been radically altered since the invention of the Internet. It has globalized the world in new and unexpected ways. The spaces and discourses created on the Internet are reflective of the new ways in which the world communicates with each other. The Internet brought instant global communication, so that events taking place around the world are now immediately broadcast to everyone. A small event such as a local political protest becomes international news. Now, everyone knows and is involved. Hardey (2007) explained, user-generated technologies which shape how users interact with it are also shaped by those interactions. This dynamic reshapes how people conceive of their urban environments and of themselves as citizens.
within it. In the West, the ‘synergistic relationship’ which is created between the city and the people generally emerges as social networks and individually tailored user experiences, while in disadvantaged areas it can solidify cultural identities and lead to the creation of new communities which organize to resist government repression and protest corruption (Parks, 2010). Online communities, organized through social networks, can be considered as a second city, a virtual city whose citizens can transcend the physical and social boundaries of their physical location. Not only does this allow for local protest movements, and much activity that is not political in nature, it allows coordination and community-building between individuals and organisations in different cities and other nations.

Yet, this easily-accessed information and opportunity to forge and participate in the new virtual city isn’t necessarily for everyone. According to Beckett (2012) there is still a digital divide, meaning that the communications technologies upon which this involvement depends are not available to those without the means to afford them. Wealthy Africans live significantly different lives to those suffering from extreme poverty. Those who are poor do not have the money or technical ability to take part in the global conversation, even though those are the populations who could stand to benefit the most from organization and participation. However, there are many instances in which previously marginalised groups have harnessed the power of the communities created by social media to not only broadcast their concerns to the world, but also to confront oppression in an organised manner.

Those communities can also serve as interpreters to the larger world concerning the events occurring within their countries. The events of the ‘Arab Spring” are an excellent example of the ways in which the Internet provides the means to understand the broader implication of events in the Middle East. The reporting from Syria by courageous, knowledgeable and skilled professional communicators like the late Marie Colvin was vital but it would have been impossible to understand fully what is happening there without the slew of video and audio material produced by anti-Assad activists (Beckett, 2012, p. 10). Similarly, events unfolding within Africa or other nations about which the rest of the world may lack adequate understanding can benefit from a vocal online presence explaining local situations to the global audience. For example, the world has a much greater understanding of the terrorist group Boko Haram due to a successful Twitter campaign.

In order to understand the ways in which the new media is conceptualized and used in Africa, it’s vital that any analysis strives to understand it from an ethnological perspective. That is, while Western culture/society views and uses media one way, they do so from a Western-centric perspective. This would not be a viable template for African society. It is a myth that the new technologies are unavailable in Africa, although they are only recently developing there. In Africa the people are becoming much more involved in their society and getting their voices heard. “A new African public has also emerged from the 1990s reforms; one that is being transformed from a passive to an aroused public” (Blankson, 2002, para. 6).

African nations are certainly transforming, however there are also traditional aspects of African society that must be acknowledged and respected. These include chieftaincies, communities of elders, and self-help organizations. While the new media can become integrated into African society, and will enable people to communicate in new ways, the traditional norms, values, and rituals must continue to be honoured in African cultures. Technology use adapts to the culture in which it is being adopted as much as it changes that culture. Therefore, it’s unlikely that social media in Africa will ever reflect the
relationship it has with Western culture. In order to fully understand new media in Africa, research will also need to understand the changes in African societies. “Scholars should also examine the changing character of the African public, its evolving role in the society, and its relationship with the state, the media and other civil society institutions...” (Blankson, 2002, para. 27).

The term ‘live-streaming’ has become common in social media normally used in reference to live video, in conjunction with other “live” blogging platforms which allow users to constantly upload and broadcast information in real time. This relatively new phenomenon was one of the empowering factors in the Arab Spring, enabling the people of Egypt, for example, to express their anger and frustration with their leaders to the world. Even though governments were trying to block certain websites, other websites such as Google were making it possible for information to get through (Bohler-Mulle & van der Merwe, 2011). This gave a global voice and face to the protesters. Suddenly online and offline worlds were intersecting. Virtual reality and physical reality began to blend into what has been termed technosociality. During the Egyptian revolution, when websites were blocked, people turned to digital cameras. When these were taken away, people used their cellphones.

Through these changes and political revolutions, social media actually developed a political power. Historically, people gathered as mobs in marketplaces or squares. Today people gather around their computers, cameras, kindle readers, and cellphones. They may not be storming the Bastille, but they are breaking down the bastions of old ways of communicating. “Social media at the moment partly plays the role of this public space, facilitating social interaction, information sharing, and fast and easy communication” (Bohler-Mulle & van der Merwe, 2011,p.6).

Another prominent change in Africa is increasing urbanization. It is expected that by the middle of this century it will be predominantly urban, a shift which promises to create large-scale social and economic consequences for African peoples. “The convergence of African urbanization, technological change and digital media are driving major changes” (Powell, 2012, p. 7). The desire for the new technologies is highly appealing. Even middle class to poor Africans want to be connected to the rest of the world. Irrespective of the cost, many are willing to give up important life sustaining goods in order to have the most basic of the new technologies. It has been noted that some people in Kenya’s slums of Nairobi would rather sacrifice a meal in order to get that all important cellphone (Powell, 2012). The digital divide still exists, but Powell (2012) describes the high penetration of cellphones into Africa, and the projected growth in the market. Far from being luxury items, cellphones are regarded as necessities because they offer advantages which can transform their lives through improved access to information and material resources. The production of cable lines for emails and other technologies, the pricing of services, the companies or governments which get these contracts, all have social and political consequences (Powell, 2012).

The fact of these changes is one that has occurred throughout African history. For centuries Africans have been fighting against larger enemies, such as colonialism and slavery. The fight for their freedom and the right to their culture has often been portrayed in the public media. In fact, telling the stories of various African struggles are endemic to the ways in which Africans live. “African theater and cultural forms became elements of resistance and the struggle for independence. Songs, dances, and ritual dramas mobilized people to understand and reject their colonial situation” (van der Puye, 1998, para. 6).
These struggles are now being played out in the new social media. In recent weeks, the abduction of several hundred girls in Nigeria has gained a voice and presence on Facebook. Their signs that read “Bring Back Our Girls” has touched millions of hearts around the world. These profound messages of loss are being discussed on Twitter, Facebook, and can be searched via Google, AOL, and others. In fact, one could suggest it is the fact of social media that has brought their pain and loss to the world. Just as radio and TV were once a profound part of African life, so now the new media is an integral part of the continent and its changes. The use of social media may, in fact, be the ultimate medium for social change in Africa. The protests and subsequent changes in Tunisia, the protests in Egypt, and now the abductions in Nigeria are all taking centre-stage on the world’s social media sites. “If events in Tunisia and Egypt are anything to go by, it is reasonable to be cautiously optimistic about the potential of social media to encourage political participation and active citizenship” (Chatora, 2012, p. 1). In fact, the international attention garnered by the Bring Back Our Girls online activism was responsible for coercing the United States and other global powers to involve themselves in the search for the kidnapped girls, lending surveillance and technological support to a campaign which may have gone unnoticed just a few years ago (Hinshaw & Nissenbaum, 2014).

It is vital to insert here that cellphones and email are just the tip of the iceberg. They by no means represent the sum total of digital or social media inculcating into Africa. Virtual games, X-Boxes, picture-sharing sites, social networking, video content sharing, and blogs represent just a small list of what is now available to people through the new technologies. One of the questions will surely be; ‘how will these new technologies frame the political and social discourses in Africa and thus change the nature of political and social participation in African life?’ Powell (2012) notes that, while radio broadcasts still reach more listeners in Nigeria, the proportion of users who access information through their mobile phones is growing rapidly. However, the movement to Occupy Nigeria in response to president Goodluck Jonathan’s deregulation of the oil industry demonstrated the power of social media platforms, specifically Facebook and Twitter, to mobilise activists. Ibrahim (2012) discovered that during the protests there was a significant overlap between those who participated in online discussions of the government’s activities, and those who participated in person. His study discovered a very “strong affinity between real public sphere and networked public sphere” (Ibrahim, 2012, pg. 55).

Ibrahim’s (2012) research demonstrates a close link between real-world physical places and online environments, where individuals are connected in ways that transcend the limitations of their immediate environments. Social media is redefining the community in African nations in important ways, expanding it to include the vast online connections between individuals. These online connections have evolved to the point where they actually have real impacts in the physical space of the community and have effectively become a part of it. The continued protests of the Occupy Nigeria movement were very different from previous protest efforts provoked by government corruption. Whereas previous protests were sporadic and mostly ineffectual, whereas the Occupy protests represented a sustained effort maintained by online activists (Sachs, 2012). In some ways, the virtual city has become just as important as the physical one.

“The current Internet penetration rate in Africa is low but, paradoxically, the continent has been experiencing a general upward trend in the use of social media” (Chatora, 2012, p.2). It is the ability to use this social media that is changing the public discourse in Africa and the nature of communication and interactions. To delve into the nature of public discourse and politics, one needs
to take into account that there are a number of ways people can engage in “the political world”. People can vote, support, and campaign for candidates, attend civil protests, or engage in lobbying and advocacy. The reasons people involve themselves in political actions vary according to gender, age, educational status, and a myriad of other variables. However, in poor countries and communities, people are more likely to be concerned with their own survival rather than a political protest. Still, social media offers the potential for political discourse in a number of new and exciting ways.

One of the reasons people do not participate, however, is lack of access to information. This has certainly been the case in rural Africa and in poor, urban communities. “There is a dearth of reliable information in many African countries and some governments heavily curtail access to what is available” (Chatora, 2012, p.4).

Powell (2012) has noted that the use of cellphones in Africa is actually beginning to alter peoples’ identities. Political instability is often a way of life for many in Africa; they are often on the move, or they have no fixed address. Many live in or have even been born inside one of the myriad refugee camps. Yet, it’s not as simple as giving people cellphones as it is in the Western world. In that culture, people grow up with and are accustomed to the constant changes in technology. Cellphones for many Africans are still new. Therefore, they have to learn the language. In other words, they have to be literate enough to use them. Another way, cellphones are altering identity in Africa is the notion of the individual. Historically, Africans have lived a communal life (Powell, 2012), but the use of technology such as cellphones is causing people to increasingly identify themselves as an individual.

Mobile phones are also being used to increase peoples’ awareness of the issues, to raise peoples’ consciousness and public awareness. But, there is a certain vulnerability in this practice due to the existence of repressive regimes. The increase in information via mobile phones enables people to do something about a situation which in times past they would have had to ignore. It creates new ways of communicating and creating identity. It also creates new ways for citizens to monitor and petition their governments, as well as new avenues for governments to reach and influence citizens, for good or ill (Powell, 2012, p. 30).

Bennett (2012) noted that social networks empower people to become involved in social and political discussions more readily than ever before. He states that they enable people to become “…catalysts of social action…” (p. 22). People develop new networks, contacts and support through social media as never before in human history. The violent eruptions in Africa have created a vision of a new means of social change. The people in Africa now have an avenue for expressing their fears, frustrations, and anger at the repressive regimes they often have to endure. Social networks enable them to instantaneously post photographs of the violence they witness which the rest of the world might have never seen.

While access to these new social networks are enabling African peoples to communicate more readily with the rest of the world, some researchers fear the new media will erode traditional practices. Exposure to influences from outside the culture seems to threaten the practices which define traditional culture and the natural means through which they are normally passed from one generation to the next. “It is true that advanced technology seems to erode our reliance on these natural media. Moreover, tribal marks are no longer in vogue; tattoos now reign supreme among the youths…” (Ajala, 2011, p. 10). However, the changes taking place in African society are not unusual.
Researchers note that the new social media is altering the ways in which people share information and how we communicate the world over. There are new rules for the new media. Our relationship with the media outlets of the world are changing. “The emergence of digital and social media needs to move beyond simple models of substitutions versus complementarities, as they have created a much more complex ecosystem for the creation and distribution of news” (Newman, Dutton & Blank, 2012, p. 17).

The emergence of the new media in Africa affords individuals the type of communicative power they never had in previous times. Peoples’ individual phones and the images they send through them have the power to change their lives and disrupt the status quo in their countries. Strelitz (2004) refers to the “global culture” that has now emerged as a result of the proliferation of these new technologies around the world. The international discourse that now takes place has the ability to shape peoples’ norms, values, beliefs, and rituals as never before. As Ajala (2011) noted, the importance of traditional communications methods, such as bead configuration and female hairstyles, are losing their traditional meaning. Many youth Africans have shed their traditional dress in favour of jeans and t-shirts.

Some would suggest that these changes have the potential to help preserve indigenous culture across the African continent. Just as Africa is exposed to cultural information from outside sources, Africans now have the power to transmit their cultural information to others, and preserve it for themselves. The introduction and expansion of social media technologies create new opportunities for development agencies, businesses, NGOs, and information agencies, including schools and libraries, to partner with rural communities, national governments, and social entrepreneurs to create, manage, and preserve knowledge and skills that are unique to communities in East Africa (Owiney, Khanjan & Maretzki, 2014, p. 5).

Social media is a means for people to share user-generated content”. This empowers people to become the source of news for the entire world. In a continent as large as Africa with such widespread issues such as poverty, hunger, repressive regimes, HIV/AIDS and other medical problems (and a dearth of good medical personnel), the advent of cellphones and the introduction of people to social media becomes a means to a way for marginalized or oppressed groups to unite and act together. It is a life where individual voices can now be heard. The poverty of remote villages can be seen. The needs of the African people can be known. They are now part of the global village and the global discourse. From the protestors at the Arab Spring to youth living in the slums, ghettos, and streets of East Africa, social media and mobile technologies have changed the way people earn their livelihoods and live their lives (Owiney, Khanjan & Maretzki, 2014, p. 6).

Politics is now transforming into a far more personalized space than ever before. As stated earlier, one person with a cellphone can reach the world. They have the ability to start a new discourse rather than be isolated with their fears. Consumers now act on their anger towards corrupt regimes by simply pointing their cellphone camera at the growing violence and disruption.

CONCLUSION

Irrespective of these changes there is a caveat to this discourse. While the protesters in Egypt brought their anger to the world, that did not necessarily mean that all change moved in a positive direction.
Regarding these events journalist Tony Cadman notes this: “It is deeply regrettable that the euphoria that surrounded the end of the Mubarak reign was short lived” (2014, para. 23). While the cellphones can point and click, it doesn’t necessarily mean the actions will end in the desired result. It does mean, however, that people in Africa have now become empowered to advocate for change whereas in previous times they might have simply endured. The new social media helps to give them that power which they richly deserve. Whether the Arab Spring was sparked by cultural the social media sharing or not, it is inarguably true that the internet made space for these local protests on an international stage and gave Africans a voice which they had not possessed before.

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LOCATING THE “REAL” CHINA

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INTRODUCTION:

Matthew Christensen’s *Decoding China*, in his own words, “deals specifically with Chinese behavioral culture, that is, the codes that people live by and use in their day-to-day behavior.”\(^1\) Christensen argues that one needs to decipher Chinese cultural practices in order to best negotiate modern China. The book, in his mind, is “a hands-on guide for anyone planning to spend time in China, whether you speak some Chinese (even a little) or not. It is for those who want to live and work independently among the Chinese, and not live in some secluded expatriate housing compound with Western standards while relying on Chinese colleagues or friends to get things done for them.”\(^2\) Christensen’s rhetoric reveals that he believes there is a right way and a wrong way to be in China, and that he knows the right way: to live and work independently among the Chinese – good; to live in secluded expatriate housing while relying on others to get things done for you – bad. Christensen has standards, it would seem, and they have to do with authenticity. He writes, “Going to China for the first time can be an intimidating experience, even for those who have studied the language. In fact, going to China for the second, third, or fourth time can also be a challenging experience, especially if you intend to be fully immersed in daily life, get off the beaten path, and experience the real China.”\(^3\)

The real China. How do we know what that China is? How does the real China announce itself or make itself known? Is there a fake China, an inauthentic China? If so, what would that inauthentic or fake China be or look like? It’s a question worth asking, I believe, for Christensen – an expert on China, a Ph.D. in Chinese Linguistics, and someone who regularly brings undergraduates to that country for study-abroad and internship learning opportunities – articulates his belief in a real China as a certainty, as something that one can experience directly. I want to interrogate this assertion and trouble his means of elevating some types of experiences and spaces and dismissing others in his quest for the real. To construct a notion of a “real” China, with its attendant implication of an inauthentic China, is to define the country in terms of mystification and nostalgia that too readily fails to incorporate the ways that the country has changed in the last 30-40 years.

In the summer of 2013, I travelled to Beijing to teach two sections of “College Writing” to Chinese nationals who attend universities in the West, but who had returned home for the summer break and who hoped to use the summer to get some college credits for their university education. I travelled to China with my wife – who was teaching in the same program that I was – and our two children, ages ten and twelve. Our stay in China lasted seven weeks; while we mainly resided in Beijing, we also visited Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Xi’an. My experience was determined by the challenges I faced as a scholar, a teacher, a husband, and a father living there and making sense of what I was going through.
My experiences were somewhat determined by the expectations that emerged both from discussions with other people but also from what I read in advance of travelling there.

I first encountered the country as a mystery, a code – in Christensen’s terminology – that I was unable to decipher. In preparing for my trip I did not have the time to learn the language, but I did spend some time reading about the different places in the country that I knew I would be travelling to and reading some of the vast history of the country. And, of course, like many other people, I went to my local bookstore to seek out guidebooks – Fodor’s and National Geographic Traveller and Lonely Planet – that would help me in my preparations. I knew that China’s economy had boomed from the 1980s onward and that it was much more contemporary, modern, and sophisticated than I might have once imagined. This was – this IS – what is often referred to as the New China, symbolized, best, perhaps in pictures of Shanghai’s Pudong skyline. The buildings in Pudong tend to emphasize a striking verticality that speaks to an emboldened vision of the future and tend to take on surreal forms, such that the designs feel as if they are in competition with one another in terms of ambition and offbeat style. Pudong is playful and enlivening and ever-expanding upward.

The architecture in this skyline looks to the future and away from the past, symbolized by The Bund, with its early twentieth century buildings inspired by European neoclassical, Beaux Arts, and art deco traditions, which tend to be more squat, if still often ornate.

The architecture of The Bund, with its solidified forms and styles that bespeak Western strength, trustworthiness, and stability, bespeaks the financial center that this area was for Western interests in terms of banking and trade in the early and mid-twentieth century. While these buildings seem to serve
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as a testament to Western attempts to make inroads into China and to influence the country’s politics and economy a century ago, Pudong’s skyline, in contrast, offers a vision of the New China. The Chinese government set up the Special Economic Zone in Pudong in 1993 and the area has grown into the financial hub not only of Shanghai but also of the country. As a literal and a financial space, Pudong is not reliant on the West and asserts its own power and vision, as encapsulated in that forward-looking architecture. Moreover, it has little to do with an older Chinese past, which can be found a short walk away, in the Yuyuan Gardens, first built in the 1600s and refurbished many times over the ensuing centuries.

In these gardens we can locate a traditional Chinese architecture and use of public and private space, especially in relation to the surrounding environs. Unlike the buildings in Pudong and on the Bund, the architectural spaces in Yuyuan Gardens meet one’s expectations of the “real” China, at least in terms of its aesthetics. The buildings were designed with ornate doorways and woodwork, tiled roofs and dragon motifs, the gardens brought a sense of peace with quiet ponds and fish, and the rockeries held secret caves and nooks for individual reflection. Although there are many people walking about, the space seems to encourage quietude and respect and the Gardens offer a sense of sanctuary from the city outside the walls. With even a fairly rudimentary knowledge of Chinese history and understanding of Eastern spirituality, one can decipher this space and its public and private functions. And while on The Bund one can recognize the Western desire for expansion, with Pudong it is much more difficult to discern a connection to a past tradition or history.

Janet Carmosky, who has lived in China for twenty years, argues in her introduction to Charis Chan’s China: Renaissance of the Middle Kingdom that, in China, “time proceeds in a fashion that is cyclic, not linear, and which refers always powerfully back to the past.” She goes on to say, “Visiting China reveals a paradox of time, where every economic and social system of the past 1,000 years is still in practice, where villages built around a well hum along just hours outside a city where people ride a magnetic levitation train to the airport.” To understand the culture of China, to “get it,” Carmosky suggests, one needs to recognize how the past and the present are interwoven:

Building an understanding of China requires a framework of some kind. Try the following: yin representing the weight of the reflective past, yang portraying the busy, technology-laden future; yin for ancient temples and world monuments, yang for skyscrapers and maglev trains; yin for China’s spiritual traditions, yang for China’s materialistic culture; yin for Asia, yang for West.

For Carmosky, to understand contemporary China is to understand that it is a space where the new and old commingle. But I would argue that Carmosky privileges a type of binary thinking in this
formulation that seems ultimately rather limiting in its dichotomous framework: yin/yang, past/future, spirituality/materialism, Asia/West. Carmosky doesn’t allow for fluidity, for complication in how we think of the relationship of the past to the present and even to the future. In other words, Carmosky’s assertion that time proceeds in a cyclic and not linear fashion in China, where ancient traditions are still contemporary in practice, is provocative and perhaps even has an element of truth to it, but doesn’t really help us think about the more complicated dynamics interwoven in the relationship between the figuration of the New China and the “real” China.

The guidebooks that I read in preparation of my visit positioned China’s deep and rich past as crucial in terms of how China defines and imagines itself, that “the past” is never just “in” the past. Even as much of the contemporary country – the younger generations especially – embraces the present and the future, emblematized in that Pudong skyline, traditions still matter, even as the country speeds into the 21st century, the ancient past seemingly receding out of view:

China is modernizing at a head-spinning pace, but slick skyscrapers, Lamborghini showrooms and Maglev trains are little more than dazzling baubles. Let’s face it: the world’s oldest continuous civilization is bound to pull an artifact or two out of its hat. You won’t find history at every turn – three decades of full-throttle development and socialist iconoclasm have taken their toll – but travel selectively in China and rich seams of antiquity pop into view. With tumble-down chunks of the great Wall, mist-wreathed, temple-topped mountains, quaint villages, water towns and eye-catching ethnic borderlands, China is home to one of the world’s oldest and most remarkable civilisations.

There is a faint echo of Christensen’s “real” China in this passage, the notion that if you can get out of the burgeoning cities and get out of the tourist-designated sites, you can get access to an experience that is somehow authentic. And that authenticity is connected somehow to the past or to a space not yet touched by the New China. That space, though, is shrinking. The forced urbanization of the populace is changing the country and changing what is available for visitors to see. China is the one of the most visited countries in the world. In the last forty years, the rate of people travelling to China has increased by dozens of millions of people, and domestic tourism is tremendously high. And while increased tourism can mean spaces and sites more amenable to Westerners with the types of conveniences that they have come to expect when they travel – more Western amenities, in other words – it can also mean a greater emphasis on what those Westerners might come to expect from the “real” China.

Let’s return to the Yuyuan Gardens in Shanghai. These gardens have a rich history and provide visitors with a sense of how these spaces would have looked centuries ago. At the same time, because of military operations that have brought troops into Shanghai, the buildings have often suffered severe disrepair many times over the years. But the spaces have always been repaired and are now reconstructed to be what they once would have looked like: simple structures with traditional Chinese rooflines that house rooms designed for meditation and quietude, with peaceful ponds, gardens, rockeries, and pavilions. The Gardens, real enough, are also a testament to an authentic past, albeit one that has been constructed over and over again for tourists to visit. They look similar to how they would have once looked and still have the same potential for quietude and meditation that they were designed for. However, now they have many more people roaming the walkways. Connected to the Gardens is the City God Temple, which is over 600 years old and which has a long and important history in the city of Shanghai. But also abutting the Gardens is the Yuyuan tourist mart, a vast retail center built over
the last thirty years to capitalize on the increased tourism, with multiple stalls and stores and eateries, all selling traditional food and goods, though often mass-produced goods. We were surprised to even find a Starbucks. The past in this broad space is alive and present, but it is also packaged and sold and interwoven with commerce and the elements of the New China that is less traditional and more capitalist and market-driven. Being there was certainly dislocating and disorienting in terms of how to read the space, but the contemporary elements didn’t make it feel inauthentic in my eyes. It just felt like it didn’t fit a predetermined notion of what authenticity looks like in contemporary China.

“In the US,” Sarah Banet-Weiser argues in her recent book, Authentic, “the 21st century is an age that hungers for anything that feels authentic, just as we lament more and more that it is a world of inauthenticity, that we are governed by superficiality.” I would suggest that this hunger that Banet-Weiser identifies in the United States applies just as well to China, or at least to how Westerners often frame China in terms of the “real.” Banet-Weiser studies how “areas of our lives that have historically been considered noncommercial and ‘authentic’…have recently become branded spaces.” The naming of a “real” China, as much as the very imagining of it, it seems to me, is an attempt to brand an experience or a space as “authentic,” as long as that experience or a space fits certain elements and principles and discounts others – living and working among the Chinese, good, living in secluded Western housing and relying on others, bad. And, curiously, it is Westerners, more so than the Chinese themselves, who are actively defining those spaces and experiences as authentic, according to how well those spaces and experiences meet their expectations of what “China” should look like, be, and mean.

In encountering China, John Pomfret argues, we must be careful not to mythologize it or to fall into a wistful longing for the ancient and traditional in such a way as to discount or to exclude the reality of what has happened in the last twenty-five years. In a Foreign Affairs review of a collection of essays by a group of scholars, politicians, and intellectuals – entitled My First Trip to China – Pomfret takes to task those who too easily fall into a nostalgia about the old China. In this essay, entitled “In Search of the Real China” and published in November 2013, Pomfret condemns the way that “disillusion and nostalgia flow through the book like a river.” He points out that “China scholars and average citizens alike still cling to their own personal notions of the ‘authentic’ China, deeply rooted in the soil of their imaginations.” As an example of this he offers a story, centered around one of the more commercialized parts of contemporary Beijing:

My wife runs a travel company in China and marvels at the discomfort that her American counterparts feel toward this different China. She once suggested that one of them advise her clients to visit a Starbucks in our neighborhood, Sanlitun, one of the hipper corners of Beijing, and people-watch as eager shoppers stream through the cavernous Apple store next door. “Why should I send my clients to see that?” the agent asked. “That’s not the ‘real’ China.” Everyone wants his own personal rickshaw and rice paddy.

Sanlitun is a bustling commercial area in the Chaoyang District of Beijing, housing many of the embassies in the nation’s capitol, that has boomed in its growth since the 1990s. It is home to up-to-date malls, including an Apple store and the largest Adidas store in the world, and many upscale restaurants, as well as a number of less refined street bars and clubs. The area is exceedingly popular with expatriates and also with Chinese, especially the younger generations who have witnessed its growth.
With its vast commercial offerings of worldwide commodities, while also being home to a wide variety of people from many different countries, Sanlitun is a clear emblem of the New China. I went to Sanlitun on a number of occasions, mainly for general shopping with my family but also for shopping at bookstores that carried English-language books. It was always crowded with people of many different nationalities (including Chinese), shopping, eating, walking, and headed to nearby Workers Stadium to watch a soccer match. To be in Sanlitun and not to recognize that there is little here of ancient China, and yet to dismiss it as not of value in seeing and understanding China as it is now, is to be blinded by nostalgia and disillusion – to use Pomfret’s terms.

The reality of contemporary China is just how hard it is to define what it is – not merely because it is so vast in size and population, as well as because of its complex relationship to the past, but also because it resists classification. Next to the Sanlitun mall is the Yaxio Market, a five-story building full of goods – clothes, leather items, pashminas, electronics, and jewelry. While there, we bought soccer jerseys there and sneakers for my children and fended off those trying to hawk the latest DVDs made from films still in the theaters. Like the DVDs, the jerseys and sneakers were not actual FIFA-approved club jerseys for Real Madrid and Manchester United nor actual Nike hightops, but instead were knockoffs – styled after the originals but not made with the same material or handicraft. At the Silk Market in Beijing, my wife bought headphones for my children, who wanted the latest versions of Beats by Dre. She wasn’t willing to pay the hundreds of dollars that these headphones sell for, purchasable at the Sanlitun mall or on Wangfujing Street. Instead, we went to the Silk Market, where different vendors competed for our attention by promising us that their fake headphones were the best fakes that we could buy. My children know that these aren’t authentic Beats by Dre headphones and that their Nikes weren’t either, but they also told us that their friends wouldn’t be able to tell that they were fake, which in their mind lent the goods an actual authenticity. Tourists flock to the Yaxio Market and the Silk Market, in part because they can purchase quality knockoff goods there, but also because they can purchase high-quality tailored clothing for reasonable prices. These items are not counterfeit but are well-made clothes tailored specifically for the individual purchasing them. The fact that these tailors work next to and on the floors above and below other merchants selling knockoff goods makes one’s judgment about the worth of these markets more complicated. One does not see many native Chinese at these markets – mainly visitors – but that doesn’t make these goods somehow less “real” or even necessarily less valuable, depending on how we define these terms.

Arjun Appardui has suggested that “Commodities represent very complex social forms and distributions of knowledge [including the knowledge] that goes into the production of the commodity; and the knowledge that goes into appropriate consuming the commodity.” While some consumers privilege the knowledge of the craftsmanship that went into the production of the commodity, others do not necessarily do so. Instead, they may prefer not so much the craftsmanship of the good, but the utility of it. Brian Spooner, in writing about the cultural function of oriental carpets, has argued, “Authenticity cannot be determined simply by detailing the objective material attributes of the artifact. It has to do not only with genuineness and the reliability of face value, but with the interpretation of genuineness and our desire for it.” Spooner complicates our assumptions about the way we interpret material attributes – such as the quality of craftsmanship – by reminding us that “the history of the craft is poorly documented [and] is open to continual revision.” Moreover, the “values ascribed to craftsmanship …have also changed significantly over the past hundred years.” When we place Spooner’s thinking
about oriental carpets in the context of the goods at sale in the Yaxio and Silk markets, we can recognize the ways that the notion of exchange that is happening in these spaces is more complex than a consumer looking to buy some stuff on the cheap that he can bring home. Visitors to these markets know that they are buying knockoff goods and counterfeits, but they still do so, which suggests, in Spooner’s terms, that their “desire for genuine ness” and the import of strong craftsmanship might not be primary. Those sneakers and headphones may not work as well as the “real” ones, but they will function well enough. Appardui argues that in order to understand the “social life” of a commodity, we need to recognize its “commodity situation” and think about commodities and goods not only in terms of production but also in terms of exchange/distribution and ultimately consumption. The confluence in the markets in China of the stalls selling knockoffs next to the tailors who are crafting well-made goods, in some ways, only serves to lead one to interpret the usefulness and value of the knockoffs as higher and more respectable.

Another narrative from a trip to a market further illustrates the challenge of defining authenticity and value. As we neared the end of our stay in Beijing and in China, my wife and I travelled to the Panjiayuan Market, known also as the Beijing Antique Market and as the Dirt Market. Although this market only came into existence in the early 1990s, it is already Beijing’s largest arts, crafts, and antiques market, with over 4,000 stalls and 10,000 merchants and dealers. The number of visitors is in the tens of thousands each day and the market is central in the growth of folk culture and antiques. My wife and I went on a Friday to buy items for our family members back home and we were especially interested in jade jewelry. For thousands of years, jade has had a prominent place in Chinese culture and is often thought to represent beauty, grace, and purity – thereby connected, in many minds, to the realm of the soul. Jade is a frequent gift and one we thought appropriate for our loved ones back home. Our experience of shopping, however, was challenging in that it was quite difficult to discern the quality of the jade we were shown and therefore to determine its worth and appropriate price. Vendors all claimed that their jade was real and the best and demonstrated certain tests to authenticate it – banging the pieces together so that we could hear what it sounded like, holding it up to the light to show what it looked like in that context, and banging it against stones. We had some sense of how to go about shopping for jade but we were easily overwhelmed by the process. To demonstrate that it wouldn’t shatter, like slate, some vendors would hurl it to the ground to show how hard it was or bang on it with a hammer. Some would hold a flame to it to show that it wouldn’t melt like plastic. After recognizing that we most likely would not be able to be fully sure of the status of the pieces’ authenticity, we decided that what mattered most to us were issues of aesthetics – did we like the look of the piece, did we like the narrative of its provenance, did we like what the jewelry symbolized? In other words, we decided that, in Apparadui’s terms, the “commodity situation” for us was more on the utility of the objects for those who would be wearing them. Our desire for genuineness was less pronounced that our desire to please our family members with an attractive piece of jewelry. Moreover, the story of going to the market, of wandering between stalls, haggling over prices with different vendors, and eventually buying these specific pieces would all be part of the “social life” of the jewelry – for us and for those who would wear them. We realized that we could not be sure whether the jade was real (though the prices suggested it was!), but that we could be sure that we had just had a real, authentic experience of shopping and haggling and purchasing. And that experience was the thing that ultimately mattered the most to us.
This story points to the problem of privileging notions of the real and authentic. How can one determine “authenticity”? What type of expertise do you need to have in order to make that determination? The actuality of China is much more complicated than what the guidebooks might tell you and how the writers of guidebooks and scholars like Carmosky and Christensen present China to their readers as a package too readily defined through the terms of mystification and too readily dismissive of the value of experiencing the place through one’s own subjectivity. Subjectivity is a necessary component of meaning-making and we should recognize that what’s going on in all of these various spaces – markets, temples, hotels and restaurants – as a type of authenticity. As cultural anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz and James Clifford have suggested, the very nature of our interventions in the places we visit determines much of our experience of that space; however, the nature of that mediated experience need not render that experience limited in the meaning we make of it, but should instead be a central element of the meaning-making process.20

One of the central issues I had to face in China was that my subject position consistently shaped my reading of situations – I was a father in one moment, a teacher in another, a tourist in a third – and that my position was often multifold. My experiences were filtered through these factors and the concept of the mediated experience was fundamental to my learning that making sense of this foreign space was not a matter of moving beyond the barriers to making sense of things but instead integrating my multiple subjectivities as meaning-makers of my experience. My experience was often similar to my colleagues teaching in my program – like them, we went and did all the tourist-y things one does in Beijing, going, for instance, to the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven, the Lama Temple – but my experience was often different in that I had my wife children with me and few other colleagues had their partners, let alone their children, with them. I found out quickly that how I experienced public spaces in China tended to be different than my colleagues because of my anxieties as a father and my concerns for my children’s well being, as well as their level of boredom/frustration with what their parents were asking them to do. There are many Chinas, not just one, in that there are many ways in which we interact with a space – be it the traditional tourist spaces, the upscale stores in Sanlitun, or even just street culture or the subway. And indeed, there might be considerations of how people in that space interact with US – the fact that I had my children with me created moments and experiences that colleagues never saw or had happen.21 The notion that there is a “real” China disregards the actuality that none of us experience it, or any space really, in the same way. It also disregards how the Chinese themselves think of their own past and what it might mean to see the “real” China.

One of the ways that we can understand how the Chinese think about their own past is through their embrace of the theme park. In Kaifeng, for instance, one of the seven ancient capitals and the cultural and political center during the Northern Song Dynasty, Millennium City Park serves as a memorial to the ancient past. The park recreates the past, with temples and gardens and recreations of folk customs, along with a number of performances that culminate in a night-time spectacle with hundreds of performers dancing and playing music, dressed in traditional costumes. This performance retells the story of the city, highlighting Kaifeng’s importance and allowing visitors to have a sense of the past – or at least a particular type of sense of the past, one strongly tinged with nostalgia for the glory of China’s ancient traditions.22 What is perhaps of most interest to me in the context of this paper, though, is not just that this park exists but that it is wildly popular, with nightly performances that are heavily attended. The past has been commodified and put up for sale. Thomas Campanella has written about
these spaces as a “spatial delivery mechanism for manufactured euphoric experiences” and has identified the rising middle class as a “particularly eager consumer of this ethereal commodity.” Campanella describes a number of theme parks and highlights Splendid China in Shenzhen, which opened in 1989 and which comprises a number of landmarks and landscapes from the Middle Kingdom in miniature, ultimately compressing 5,000 years and 10,000 miles of Chinese ancient civilization into one space. Much of that compression edits out complexities or complication, especially of the recent past. Campanella writes, “Splendid China presents a much-edited version of Chinese space and time, an unblemished and politically neutral vision of national heritage…Splendid China is the China of the deep past – the Celestial Empire or Middle Kingdom. There are no tiny statues of Chairman Mao, no state-owned factories or Great Hall of the People.” This is a space of and for nostalgia, of something lost but still magical and revered, a space of celebration. The past here is of a particular type. Much as with Millennium City Park, Splendid China packages and presents the past in a very particular fashion – to best appeal to the visitor and tourist. And not all of those tourists are foreign, as Campanella points out. Many of them are native Chinese. These parks, built in the last 25-30 years, mean to take advantage of the emerging middle class and their new leisure time and disposable income. The past authenticates the New China, in some regards, because it is still an integral part of it. But the New China authenticates the past by keeping it so vital and present in the contemporary. It’s a nuanced relationship and the nostalgia for the past, for the rural and sacred traditions, belies the ways that that past has always been packaged, especially for Western eyes and experiences.

One day, while teaching, I mentioned to my students that I was going to the Great Wall, but that my family and I were going to be hiking the Wild Wall, not the part that had been rebuilt and refurbished. I told my students that we were hiking the Wild Wall because I wanted to experience the “real” China, as a number of my colleagues and my guidebooks had been advocating. A funny thing happened. My students looked at me stupefied. They had no idea what I was talking about or what the “real” China would mean. It was only after going to the wall that I fully understood why they might be so confused. We went on a hike of the wild Wall at Mutianyu, that part of the Wall that had not been rebuilt. The trail is challenging to climb at times, overgrown with vegetation, charming in its “rundown-ness.” I saw what Fodor’s described as the “chunks of the Great Wall” in person. It was an interesting and powerful way to see the Wall, to recognize the overwhelmingly difficult task of what it meant to build it, to understand its function at the time. It was hot and humid and it was a sweaty four-hour hike. It ended at the very point where it met up with the refurbished wall. This part was clearly a reconstruction of the Great Wall and it is a well-known tourist destination, designed to be a commodification of China’s past. Some visitors choose to avoid this part as a way to engage more directly with that past, to see the wall as it has become, where we had traversed. However, our experience was through a tour with a guide who took us up and along the wall and talked to us about certain sections and certain parts of the history and eventually led us to the refurbished part hours later. We would not have known where to start or in what direction to head. We would have been lost without his guidance, and his commentary certainly added to the allure of the trip. Although our hike and our experience was off the beaten path – literally, people are not supposed to go there – that “authentic” past was still packaged for us and we paid for our experience of moving through it.

Our trip along the Wild Wall, in other words, was still a package, a commodified experience perhaps not so different than the ones enjoyed by visitors to the refurbished parts of the Wall. Indeed, as we
came out of the Wild Wall, we saw a sign alerting people that this area was forbidden to visitors. But many people were entering this forbidden area, curious to see what was there. They didn’t stay long, but they could have had they had the wherewithal to do so. Nothing was really stopping them. The border between the artificial and refurbished past and the authentic and “real” past was slight. And even the “real” past is sometimes constructed. I would argue, though, unlike Christensen and Carmosky and so many others, that the fact that it is packaged for us does not mean that we cannot have a meaningful experience with and through it.

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2 Ibid., 14.
3 Ibid., 10.
4 The Bund has returned to serving as a financial center, but of Western interests and financial institutions more than of Asian ones.
6 Ibid., iv.
7 Ibid., ix.
10 Ibid., 14.
13 Pomfret, “In Search of the Real China,” http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/140168/john-pomfret/in-search-of-the-real-china (accessed June 6, 2014). Moreover, speaking of authenticity, rickshaws were not even invented in China. The etymology of the term is Japanese, and Japan is where the first rickshaw was put to use, though by the late nineteenth century there were thousands operating in China.
14 It is not as grand a shopping area on and around Wangfujing Street, in central Beijing near the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square, which has even more international stores and malls than those in Sanlitun. (In Shanghai, the equivalent would be East Nanjing Road, which ends/begins on The Bund and extends to People’s Square and then continues as West Nanjing Road to the Jing’an District.) Still, as home to so many of the embassies in the city, Sanlitun has something of the atmosphere of the West. In other words, it is not merely a commercial area, it is a place of residence and a destination site for locals and visitors both.
15 Arjun Appadurai, “Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in The Social Life of Things:
17 Ibid., 200.
18 Ibid., 200.
20 For more on such types of interventions and the theories behind them, see Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures and Clifford, The Predicament of Culture.
21 It turns out that many of the people we met while out and about were absolutely fascinated with my children, and this created a number of signature moments in public spaces that shaped how we have thought of our China experience.
22 Daniel Youd spoke of Millennium City Park at the 2014 ACLA Conference in New York City. I thank him for sharing his observations on the nighttime performance.
24 Ibid., 255.
25 In my experience, tradition is still very much a part of Chinese culture. Like so many young men and women, in China and elsewhere, my college-age students enjoy lifestyles of the twenty-first century that have nothing to do with the past – going to clubs, singing karaoke, drinking and dancing. However, in their essays for my classes, these same students often wrote about traditions that they participated in with their families and they wrote about these traditions with great respect and fondness. The past is very present in their lives in terms of how they spend time with their families, for instance. Students often wrote about rituals around food and around holidays as signature moments for them in their relationships with their families and in how they thought about their homes.
THE MEDIATED CITY CONFERENCE
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INTRODUCTION

In June 2012, writers Joseph Fink and Jeffrey Cranor released the first episode of the twice-monthly podcast Welcome to Night Vale. Each episode of the podcast is produced as a community radio show broadcast from the fictional town of Night Vale and hosted by local presenter, Cecil Palmer. An isolated desert community, Night Vale regularly experiences super-natural events and its inhabitants are under constant surveillance by local authorities. Fink and Cranor’s writing casts these aspects of life in the town as constituting the mundane in order to produce a comic effect. Often parodying real companies in mock advertisements dispersed throughout the “broadcast,” the podcast offers a critique of free-market capitalism, while avoiding easy alignment with any specific political ideology.

Welcome to Night Vale is not, first and foremost, a podcast about architecture or politics. Nevertheless, the architecture of the town and the governmental and corporate powers controlling this community remain central to the narrative structure of the show. The podcast avoids detailed descriptions of the town’s architecture, with key buildings within Night Vale and its surrounds instead used as a series of recurring landmarks. Without suggesting any direct links between the podcast and earlier modeled, performed, collaged, drawn and written works by the Italian radical architecture project during the 1960s and 70s, the following paper places Night Vale alongside this earlier work, raising questions about the podcast as a medium for the conceptualization of architecture and the city in non-visual terms.

Night Vale

Generally speaking, we might think of the architecture of Night Vale as falling into five broad categories: commercial spaces, municipal infrastructure, large-scale development projects, housing and, lastly, temporary mystical structures. Across each of these categories, the architecture of the town operates as a spatial network, largely described through its approximate location in relation to other structures, as well as the forms of governmental, corporate and mystical powers that are active within these areas. The commercial architecture of Night Vale includes both local businesses, such as the Desert Flower Bowling Alley and Arcade Fun Complex or Big Rico’s Pizza, as well as recognizable chain stores like the Arby’s restaurant or Ralphs grocery store. Although Cecil does mention people who have been spotted shopping in the Ralphs, both the grocery store and Arby’s restaurant are incorporated into the story of Night Vale largely through events that occur either above or beside both spaces. Cecil describes the mysterious lights that appear above the Arby’s in a number of episodes, and the vacant lot beside the Ralphs has been used as meeting places and sites for ritualistic ceremonies across the series—perhaps most notably the terrifying ceremony held there for boys from the local scout troop who had achieved the rank of “Eternal Scout” in episode twenty-three.¹
The municipal infrastructure of Night Vale includes the Council Dog Park and the Night Vale Public Library. Although street names are not typically used in the description of Night Vale’s architecture, in Cecil’s opening monologue within the pilot episode of the series, he announces the opening of the new city council dog park, “on the corner of Earl and Summerset, near the Ralphs.” Through this project the audience also begins to understand the mysterious nature of the council, as Cecil goes on to remind his listeners that no dogs or people are allowed within the facility, which contains hooded figures surrounded by an electrified fence. The Public Library is also a potentially dangerous place within Night Vale, in part due to the fact that librarians are considered to be highly dangerous, having been responsible for a large number of deaths in the town. Later, it is also revealed that the library building has no entrance, when Cecil announces that the building will undergo renovations so that “we will no longer have to enter by waking up between two shelves in a dizzy haze, unsure of how we got there, and then wandering around, trapped, until we wake with a start in our own beds, covered with sweat, and with a few books we checked out on our nightstand.”

In addition to these first two categories of commercial and municipal architecture, newly completed and proposed large-scale projects, such as the new residential development of Desert Creek, the Night Vale Harbour and Waterfront Recreation Area, and proposed Night Vale Stadium are also mentioned within the podcast. The harbour development and stadium, both initiatives of the Night Vale Business Association, are introduced in the first episodes of Welcome to Night Vale, explaining the highly unusual approach to new development in the town. While, as Cecil observes in the pilot episode of the podcast, “there is some concern [in the town] about the fact that, given we are in the middle of a desert, there is no actual water at the waterfront,” the Business Association’s explanation that the development will be a boost to the town’s tourism industry seems to be largely accepted. Also, in episode three, the planned stadium is described as a 50,000-seat theatre beside the harbor-front development that will only open once a year, on November 10, for the “annual parade of the mysterious hooded figures.”

While the stadium and harbour front projects are linked to the Night Vale Business Association and—through the presence of hooded figures—the Night Vale City Council, the recently completed Desert Creek residential development appears connected instead to the larger, mystical forces present in the town. Specifically, the development, situated behind the Night Vale Elementary School, contains within it a house that does not exist. Cecil introduces this house in the pilot episode of the series, when it is revealed that the new scientist in town, Carlos, has been studying it with his research team. As Cecil advises his listeners, the house is “between two identical houses, so it would make more sense for it to be there then not. But, he [Carlos] says, they have done experiments, and the house is definitely not there.” Other houses mentioned in the series also appear to be connected to these larger forces; Old Woman Josie’s house “out near the car lot” is connected to the presence of angels in the first episode of Welcome to Night Vale, while the Apache Tracker’s house disappears when this character vanishes from the town in episode seven of the series.

The last broad category of architectural projects described within Welcome to Night Vale mentioned here are the mystical structures that appear throughout the town from time to time, often vanishing without explanation. Temporary structures such as the large, talking pyramid that appeared in the Beatrix Lowman Memorial Meditation Zone in episode nine, as well as the series of old oak doors that become visible throughout the town from episode fifteen, point to the presence of powerful forces outside of the City Council or Sheriff’s Secret Police. A recurring landmark is the brown stone spire,
often seen in the distance and a monument that may be the same structure as the lighthouse described in a number of views through the oak doors and by missing intern Dana. The advertisement that aired within episode twenty-four suggests that the spire was “built in the night several weeks ago by unknown agents, or aliens, or animals, or just our collective imagination.” In later episodes, subway entrances also appear temporarily throughout Night Vale, as well as the “condos”—actually a vast series of black cubes—in the live episode of the same name.

Radical Night Vale?

In addition to the spatial network created by the architectural landmarks of Night Vale, the town’s built form is also communicated in relation to political and corporate power. Of particular importance in this regard is Strexcorp Synermists Incorporated—a corporation that assumes control of the town as the series progresses. Eclipsing the power of the City Council, Sheriff’s Secret Police and The Vague, Yet Menacing, Government Agency, the company and its representatives become an increasingly threatening and controlling presence within Night Vale and the surrounding region, communicated through the increasing censorship of Cecil’s program by Strexcorp-controlled Station Management. Strexcorp is distinguished from these other powers largely through its purely corporate ideology, setting up a destructive logic based on vague notions of productivity and efficiency—due to the fact that Strexcorp does not seem directly connected to the manufacturing of goods or provision of services. If Strexcorp might be seen to operate here as capitalism in abstract terms, then turning to an earlier moment involving a critique of capitalism through the refusal of the architectural object may provide a tool for the examination of architecture within Welcome to Night Vale.

Despite the temporal and disciplinary distance separating the work of architettura radicale and Welcome to Night Vale, and unlikely as it may seem, a comparison between the architectures of these works may not be completely uninvited by Fink and Cranor. In fact, a moment of radical action within the podcast serves as our entry point into this discussion. In “Parade Day”, episode forty-six of Welcome to Night Vale, Cecil reports on an attempted takeover of Strexcorp headquarters by a “band of well-read middle schoolers” led by fugitive 13-year old, Tamika Flynn. In their attempt to put an end to Strexcorp’s “dystopian corpocratic regime,” the group takes control of a number of the company’s helicopters. During his broadcast, and while urging Night Vale citizens to take action to help overthrow Strexcrop, Cecil reports that the teenagers “apparently learned to fly the helicopters by reading books. Specifically, they learned by reading Italo Calvino’s Invisible Cities, and a collection of Shirley Jackson short stories.”

Moments later, when Cecil notifies his listeners that Tamika Flynn has been arrested by Strexcorp security officers, he also reports that she was seen waving “a heavily-notated copy of Bertolt Brecht’s Life of Galileo.” While the somewhat sinister rituals that take place in the small desert community of Night Vale undoubtedly recall those of the village at the centre of Jackson’s 1948 short story “The Lottery,” the episode’s slightly more cryptic references to Calvino and Brecht point to a much weaker (but nevertheless interesting) connection between Welcome to Night Vale and modes of post-war Marxist thought. There is much that could be written about the broader connections between these literary figures and Italy’s post-war New Left, but of particular interest here is the presence of Calvino’s text within the podcast.

First published in Italian as Le città invisibili in 1972, Invisible Cities presents a mode of thinking about the city that is, broadly speaking, dependent on two opposed but inter-related concepts: individual moments within the city and the grid as an ordering device for the city as a whole.
this work, the tension and overlap between these concepts play out through the story’s two main characters, Marco Polo and the emperor Kublai Khan. While Polo sees the city largely in terms of individual, organic moments, Kahn’s understanding of the city as a game of chess invokes the logic of the grid. Both approaches tend towards an abstract notion of the city that offers critical reflection on the operation of urban form in more abstract terms, while also arguably being linked to the specific contexts of Venice (Polo) and New York (Kahn). Bound up in the same moment as Calvino’s writing in *Invisible Cities*, the work of *architettura radicale* was also preoccupied to some extent with the city as a site of confrontation between the abstract and familiar, the limited and the limitless.

The non–traditional architectural output of many *i radicals* (as they referred to themselves) raised significant questions about architecture’s isolation from and relationship to its wider context. Collectives such as Superstudio, Archizoom, 9999 and UFO that formed in Florence during the late 60s, while possessing distinct attitudes about the politics of their architectural work, emerged in reaction to the societal unrest that characterized this decade. They modelled their interrogations of architecture and its wider post–war socio–political context in Italy on the anxieties heightened by the transformations of the period in relation to both new technologies and urbanisation under late capitalism. Shifting between various media and modes of representation, *i radicals* sought to understand the city in terms of abstract patterns of production and consumption overlaid with the individual architectural moments that represented the city’s more tangible form. While the presence of Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* within the narrative the podcast as a key source for those undertaking radical political action does not seem purely accidental, this moment within Welcome to Night Vale serves here as a prompt to consider architecture within the podcast in relation to the terms of the Italian radical architecture project before it.

**Ad Infinitum Town: No-Stop City**

The modeled and drawn studies of Archizoom’s No-Stop City depicted an urban logic completely stripped of any singular or figurative architectural elements—that is, the city as an unlimited site of consumption in the form of office and domestic cell-like interiors, car parks and commercial spaces (ie the supermarket)— taking the *operaista* (workerist) theorist Mario Tronti’s concept of society as a factory to extreme conclusions in revealing the ideological character of the urban environment. As Pier Vittorio Aureli has observed, the models and drawings depicting No-Stop City were concerned with “a radicalization *per absurdum* of the industrial, consumerist and expansionist forces of the capitalist metropolis in the form of a continuous city.” Within Fink and Cranor’s *Night Vale* the town’s architecture, in resisting definition in terms of both its overall form and individual architectural moments, operates as both the expression of control by various powers (increasingly Strexcorp) and a tool for embedding this more abstract network of power and consumption within the familiar setting of a small, rural community.

In this sense, Night Vale is both small town and infinite city—a polemic rendered absolute by the medium of the podcast. Listeners understand the individual architectural moments that make up the town (the library, the elementary school, the local pizzeria), but these moments are not described in formal terms, allowing the buildings to primarily be treated as nodes of activity within a spatial network. Despite consistent references to Night Vale as a bustling or even quiet little town, as well as locations “at the edge” or “outside of” town, the size and—by extension—limits of Night Vale are deliberately unclear. The presence of mystical structures within the town, in particular the appearance of oak doors leading to vast new landscapes and structures that a number of the town’s inhabitants find...
themselves occupying, points to the role of architecture and architectural elements in maintaining this tension between the small town and the unlimited city.

Like No-Stop City, Welcome to Night Vale presents an environment of consumption that is devoid of primary production. Where the supermarkets, car parks and cell-like interiors of No-Stop City were presented as an endless series of repeated, non-figurative structures of consumption, Night Vale also operates without any clear source for the products the town consumes. The recurring character of John Peters, a local farmer reveals Fink and Cranor’s intention to deal with production in Night Vale through its conspicuous absence (or, perhaps more accurately, its invisibility). As Cecil explains in an episode entitled “Wheat and Wheat By-products,” given the desert location of Night Vale, Peters has never successfully grown any crops. Rather, he survives on a “half a million dollar annual subsidy for imaginary corn, which has been one of Night Vale’s greatest exports.” Here again, the podcast points to a carefully curated tension between the logic of a small town (as an entity defined by modes of agricultural or industrial production), and a limitless landscape of consumption where it is possible for products and objects to appear—and disappear. Similarly, the architectural containers of No-Stop City existed primarily for modes of consumption, but the unlimited repetition of these elements left no room for the primary industries that would sustain such an urban condition.

Tensions between the defined and the limitless urban conditions implied in Archizoom’s work and Welcome to Night Vale were also a key feature of the two-dimensional mixed media works completed by another Florentine collective, Superstudio, from 1969, entitled Il monumento continuo (The Continuous Monument). The project was described through a series of collages and comic strips as a megastructure-like grid of neutral cubes stretching parasitically across existing landscapes and cities. Unlike No-Stop City, which appeared on paper largely in plan drawings, Il monumento continuo was represented solely through perspectival views, creating a completely externalised relationship to the project and emphasising the structure’s apparent relationship to the natural environment and existing urban centres.

For Superstudio, the monument was devoid of design and an internal program, consisting instead of a blank cube repeated over and over again in the pursuit of a monumental structure. The self-imposed exile of this structure, moving above and around existing environments seems to leave both nature and the city free from its own robotic, endless and repetitive growth. Nevertheless, this set of relationships is an illusion and, in fact, everything contained within the perspectival images of Il monumento continuo has been redefined by the “total urbanization” of the scheme. The dead architecture of the monument mimics the rationalised logic of unchecked capitalist growth, but is a “non-space” that works to obscure the urbanisation of those elements of the compositions that appear familiar. Taking Superstudio’s resistance to the architectural object further, the non-visual medium of the podcast casts the small town identity of Night Vale as an equally insidious tool for disguising forms of unlimited and unchecked growth. Not unlike Il monument continuo, moments of confrontation between the rationality of pure forms (the “condos”, the pyramid) and the “formlessness” of the town (as a series of events and relations of power) reveal opportunities for critiquing architecture’s relationship to its broader context.

Superstudio and Archizoom’s architecture resisted any clear design qualities through the abstract, drawn, collaged and modeled content of their works. The disappearance of the individual architectural object and absence of design qualities in this way attempted to overcome the commodity status of these objects (and, as such, push past their desirability) in order to reveal architecture’s relationship to
its wider political and economic context. Architecture in Welcome to Night Vale is arguably able to more completely reject design content through the non-visual medium of the podcast. Using this lack of visual content, Fink and Cranor have deployed architecture in Welcome to Night Vale as a non-figurative spatial network clearly implicated in sustaining the tension between Night Vale as small town and as unlimited landscape of consumption and control. Placing Night Vale’s architectural content alongside earlier works associated with architettura radicale, raises broader questions in relation to the intent behind Welcome to Night Vale and the potential for architecture to operate critically through the podcast medium. Specifically, can radical architecture be present in contemporary non-architectural works, and what opportunities might exist for describing architecture in relation to its wider social, political and economic context through the podcast?

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mechanical model of the all-production factory, of early capitalism, but that we were well on our way to another model, the supermarket, a place of consumption, a faceless, anonymous container within which goods were displayed and moved without requiring Architecture in order to be represented." "Continous Monument," Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, Accessed August 31, 2014, http://www.cristianotoraldodifancia.it/superstudio/05.htm

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ALLAN KAPROW’S FLUIDS: AN ARCHITECTURAL HAPPENING IN LOS ANGELES

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INTRODUCTION:

In 2008, the Museum of Contemporary Art presented an exhibition entitled, Allan Kaprow—Art as Life, whereby art historians revisited the legacy of artist Allan Kaprow’s Happenings and his influence on temporal and performative artistic practices. In conjunction with the exhibition, the museum coordinated the reinvention of Fluids, Kaprow’s best remembered, most elaborate, and most often repeated Happening. (Figure 1) Originally carried out in the fall of 1967 as a commissioned piece for his mid-career retrospective, Fluids was a multi-site Happening that took place in fifteen different locations across Los Angeles over a three-day period. In locations ranging from the San Fernando Valley, Beverly Hills to Watts, participants constructed, block-by-block, a 4,900 cubic-foot, rectangular ice structure and left it to melt. While Kaprow’s previous Happenings were predominately loose and unscripted, Fluids required an immense amount of advanced planning and organization such as identifying sites, obtaining permits, acquiring insurance, scheduling ice deliveries as well as coordinating on-site engineers to ensure that each structure would not warp, sag or collapse during construction. (Figure 2) Here, we can imagine Kaprow’s role as an artist shifting to that of a project architect, but I will argue that the remarkable qualities of Fluids registered not at the scale of the individual ice structure but by way of its ambition to reveal the city’s development patterns.

For three months, while living in the Pasadena foothills of art philanthropist Peggy Phelp’s private residence, Kaprow toiled over the concept of what it would mean to build and present blank ice structures throughout Los Angeles. As he outlined the conditions for Fluids, he wrote notes ranging from fictitious press releases and newspaper articles that connected the building of ice enclosures to civil rights demonstrations taking place in the ‘troubled neighborhood’ of Watts, and also wrote stories of architecture firms claiming to revolutionize the concept of housing by promoting models of ‘vanishing houses.’ Little has been written about these forged narratives and even less has been written about Kaprow’s pre-occupation with architecture and his interest in urban planning. The substantial gestures critiquing the urban condition of Los Angeles have never been considered critically, and is reconsidered here for the first time outside of an art historical context. Studied through an architectural lens, the intent of this paper is first to offer an in depth analysis of the project and present Fluids as a Happening that revealed the architectural and urban specificities of a city whose planning tactics were on the edge of something not yet defined. In other words, at the time Kaprow carried out Fluids, the Los Angeles School of Urbanism had not yet established the city’s status as a model form of contemporary urbanization, nor had Reyner Banham published his celebration of the rapidly developing city as a neatly packed ecology. Instead, Los Angeles recalled the plains and residual spaces found in Cedric Price and Peter Hall’s “Non-Plan: an Experiment in Freedom” (1967-69) and Archizoom’s proposal for a No-Stop City (1970) that imagined an endless city without mandates and without borders. Not only did Los Angeles epitomize this type of vast, continuous landscape, in many respects LA’s urban history was marked by a Wild Wild West approach. According to Robert Fogelson, private development drove public planning infrastructure where any "potential of planning was thus effectively reduced to zoning practices.[and] merely sanctioned the preferences of private enterprise.” In the six years between 1964 and 1970, the allowable density of homes in neighborhoods from Venice to Mid-City increased from eight units to two-hundred, and within roughly the same years, the entire county of Los Angeles issued their highest percentage of new construction permits for
multi-family housing units. As a result, the county attracted the interest of private developers; and construction of apartment buildings in neighborhoods across the county more than tripled, while development in the neighborhood of Watts, despite their housing shortage after the uprising in 1965, remained stagnant.

Kaprow revealed these uneven development patterns through Fluids, mediating the city by drawing attention to the social, political and economic forces that played a provocative role in shaping the city’s urban form. Through the ephemeral event of a Happening, Kaprow’s aspired to undermine the mastery and originality that was important to modernism, and while Fluids is considered an important project in the development of live, performance art, read alongside the history of L.A.’s uneven development patterns, it becomes clear that Fluids exists as an architectural endeavor that narrates one of the most provocative relationships between urban form and private development.

**Mediating through Maps**

Surveying the physical landscape of Los Angeles, Kaprow began to map various locations within the city of Los Angeles, choosing sites with distinct histories such as the Dodge House in Mid-City, the Trousdale Estate in Beverly Hills, and on campus of Pierce College in the San Fernando Valley. The Dodge House was built for Walter Luther Dodge by Irving Gill in 1916. Located in a single-family R-1 zone, the neighborhood was re-zoned to R-4 in 1964, increasing the allowable density of the homes on N. Kings Road. In May 1967, the owner of the property Bart Lytton announced a $2.4 million development plan for the 2.75-acre site and five months later Kaprow performed Fluids on the front lawn of the property. The house was ultimately demolished in 1970 and replaced with apartments, and whether Kaprow’s only intention to carry out Fluids at the Dodge house was merely to support preservation efforts, Fluids highlighted the city’s real estate trends and shifts taking place in residential building activity at the time. (Figure 3) The large ice houses built on the Pierce College campus similarly appeared to draw attention to the history of real estate speculation that played a significant role in the making of the San Fernando Valley. Lastly, in the final performance of Fluids, Kaprow chose the site of an empty lot in the Trousdale estates, a former ranch that was purchased and subdivided for housing development in 1954. Located at the foothills of Beverly Hills, the Trousdale estates represented what Reyner Banham called the privileged enclaves where “the financial and topographical contours (of the foothills) correspond almost exactly: the higher the ground the higher the income.” In the winter of 1965, Architecture Digest featured phase two of the Trousdale Estate’s development designed by A. Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons. While only five of the proposed ten model homes were built, the major selling points included the estates’ “air of deeply buried privacy,” and view of “Century City” that had recently been developed. The act of building melting ice structure on the Trousdale’s private development spoke directly to L.A.’s penchant for exclusivity, perpetuating what Bernard Tschumi correctly criticized as America’s form of middle-class retreat from the “decaying remnants of the inner-city.”

Mapped in its entirety, Fluids extended through time and space, recalling a ‘psychogeographic’ intervention in the city. (Figure 4) When Guy Debord and the Situationists developed the Naked City in 1957, they sought to counter the effects of the ‘spectacle’ through spatio-temporal investigations of the city, using duration of experience and participatory action. Composed of fragments and cut-outs from the existing structure of the Plan de Paris, the Naked City produced a new type of map that enhanced what Debord regarded as an “illustration of the hypothesis of psychogeographical turntables.” For Debord, a psychogeographical map of the modern city allowed a user to drift through the city, organize space around revolutionary principles, and reclaim urban environments from the grips of commodity consumption in order to ultimately re-appropriate space for social needs. In a similar manner, Fluids directed attention to the spectacle of capitalist production and worked to subvert the politics laden within each location.
Mediating through the Ephemeral

In an interview after *Fluids* was carried out, Kaprow explained how he intended *Fluids* to be an intervention on urban planning explaining, “in this country, we’re brought up on multiplicity; it’s the very stuff of our spiritual and economic life. The sense of seriality, of continuousness within which everything quickly grinds down only to be replaced by something else. These things make me aware of time and space in a way that traditional approaches to aesthetics never could.” As former student of John Cage and an attentive reader of John Dewey, Kaprow became highly critical of the institution of art, and aggressively worked to “blur the line between art and life.” As early as 1959, Kaprow began to rearrange the relationship between the artist and audience and explored duration, weather, and space. He also began to experiment with participation and most importantly, began to relocate his practice out into the environments that people experienced on a daily basis. For Benjamin Buchloh, Kaprow’s emphasis on the ‘everyday’, “critically addressed nominal status of the art object, the art audience and the artist as producer.” By resisting the authorial role of the artist and in his direct repression of “traditional approaches to aesthetics” and promotion of the ‘everyday’ Kaprow was, interestingly, appropriating architectural concerns.

By turning to architecture, Kaprow was able to make use of the disciplines renewed concerns for organizing bodies in space, ephemerality, participation and collaboration, on a level that making “traditional art” could never afford. During the sixties, architecture was still experiencing the tail end of post-war expansion, which had obscured its capacity to communicate as a socially engaged form of language in large part due to its association with economic conditions of production, standardization and distribution. As a response, architects during this time began to shift their focus toward a socially and politically engaged practice. Emphasis on urban events, participation, experience and duration were emblematic of architecture’s desire to “bring architecture back in touch with the heartbeat and the fleshy hand of the man.”

Conceived as a participatory event, *Fluids* appropriated these concerns and used architecture to generate interaction amongst participants through the collaborative labor of constructing ice houses. In each of the fifteen different locations that *Fluids* was carried out, the physical act of communal labor recalled the countercultural communard of Drop City, which exemplified Kaprow’s call for “total integration of art and life” to the fullest degree. The collaborative effort associated with the impulse to build “community” translated directly through the act of building itself, wherein each location participants followed a hard and fast recipe. “Rectangular ice enclosures of ice blocks (measuring about 30 feet long to wide and 8 feet high) are built throughout the city, their walls are unbroken, they are left to melt.” However, evident in the working notes in Kaprow’s archive, adhering to this procedural script was the least important component of *Fluids* and only necessary insofar as serving as a primer for interaction.

*Fluids* in Watts

Among the loose-leaf sheets of legal paper marked with budget estimates, preparatory sketches, and numerous fake press releases, Kaprow wrote a “news brief” that described the construction of giant ice structures in Watts and “other trouble town areas.” (Figure 5) The write up was short, but described how the process of building *Fluids* caught the attention of the media.

Police have no reports of civil disobedience that there is any connection with civil rights demonstration. Authorities and local leaders in Watts and other trouble-town areas deny knowing connection with local political movements anything more than what was read in the newspaper.
Kaprow struggled to find the appropriate words to use in the draft, writing ‘civil disobedience,’ crossing it out, then correcting what seems to be an attempt to write out ‘civil rights disturbances’ to ‘civil rights demonstrations.’ The news brief calls attention to assumptions often made that any crowd engaging in a form of public activity could be misconstrued as a type of civil disturbance, particularly in the neighborhood of Watts where the widely publicized rebellion took place in 1965. While there is no evidence to suggest that Kaprow was trying to create a riot through the performance of Fluids, his description of a public spectacle does correspond to the type of social action in public space that he was ultimately interested in exploring.22

Mediating through Participation

Describing the Happening as an act of civil disobedience may have been the most appropriate way to describe Kaprow’s desire to create an art of collaborative actions rather than a lasting object-based art. Like many of his Happenings, it is unclear if he ever had a singular and fixed intention for his work, but to the extent that Kaprow was undoubtedly interested in redefining the audience of art to become active participants, it would seem inconceivable to regard Fluids as it took place in Watts without considering its relation to architecture’s contribution to the burgeoning philosophy that social change and community development can be achieved through collaboration and participation. Analogous to a site-specific work that revealed site’s social, political and symbolic context,23 Fluids in Watts produced an awareness of the heightened social and political issues that were laden within the site. In this way Fluids can even be described as an act of architectural activism reminding us of the significant role the citizen, user, and participatory groups began to play in determining the immediate outcome for L.A. neighborhoods, especially the city’s central city neighborhoods such as Watts.

The challenges the city of Watts faced in the aftermath of the uprising deserves more detailed scrutiny than can be given here, but the issues that were largely responsible for the uprising remained and Watts continued to be institutionally segregated, politically and economically from the rest of Los Angeles.24 According to a 1970 AIA sponsored conference on the effectiveness of Community Development Corporations, only 36 housing units had been developed in south central five years after the Watts rebellion when more than 5,000 units were reported to still be needed. Unlike the San Fernando Valley and Mid-City where neighborhoods were up-zoned for increased development, there was very little private or civic investment in the central city, even with the concentrated need. As a result, neighborhood based community action groups established an active voice in the planning process and became the life force of a neighborhood fraught with limited preservation assistance from the city. Groups such as the Watts Community Housing Corporation, Studio Watts Workshop and the Urban Workshop represented this shift. As new category of do-it-yourself community planners, tasked with intervening in their immediate neighborhood, their efforts seemed to coincide directly with Kaprow’s emphasis on participation that defined his architectural Happening.

Conclusion

As a pointed example of an artwork that transgressed the disciplinary boundaries set by art history, this paper examined how Fluids intersected directly with architecture’s desire to reinforce collaboration and participation as an expanded definition of architectural practice, translating and transferring architectural concerns in order to produce what I defined as an architectural happening. Kaprow’s concept of the “Happening” and his interest in participatory events, dislodged the authorial figure of the singular artist in favor of collaborative strategies that involved audience members. As a singularity in Kaprow’s oeuvre, Fluids engaged the urban environment, drawing on the urban form of Los Angeles and private development in order to reveal the social, political and economic underpinnings of the city’s urban structure. Moving from site to site, Kaprow mapped L.A.’s fragmented ‘territories’ and highlighted the intensely different socio-economic locales of Beverly Hills, the valley and Watts, and in each location, re-claiming space through social and spatial relationships,25 even if momentarily to build ice houses.
Figure 1. Fluids, 1967. Location Trousdale Estates. Photo: Julian Wasser.

Figure 2. Budget Notes

Figure 3.
Figure 4. Image shows locations that I plotted into Mapquest based on the Kaprow’s list. Image below is the list of locations to stage Fluids which includes full address, date, time, and potential participants/volunteers.

Figure 5. Kaprow’s notes on Watts location
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1 For Happenings and their connection to performance art and theater see: Kirby, Michael. “Happenings, an illustrated anthology.” Scripts & Productions by Jim Dine.


3 During the early 1970s, Los Angeles architects and urban planners were only beginning to destabilize and reconfigure the Chicago School’s approach to urbanism that had dominated the planning discourse. See Michael Dear’s From Chicago to LA: Making Sense of Urban Theory (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002).


7 Subdividing land for suburban development in the San Fernando Valley was predicated on the belief that water would be available in the agrarian valley. On November 1913, William Mulholland provided the resource to the valley, opening up the possibility for speculators to actually develop on their land. For an excellent history of the single family only zone in Los Angeles see Dana Cuff, and Per Johan DAHL. “Rx for the R1:Sustaining the Neighborhood.”

8 Dear, Michael. “Rediscovering Reyner Banham’s Los Angeles.”


10 Artist Judy Chicago carried out a similar performance entitled Disappearing Environments. In 1968, Chicago collaborated with Lloyd Hamrol and Eric Orr to build nine, all-white, mini-ziggurats made of twenty – five tons of dry ice. By using the temporary material of dry ice and incorporating road flares, the artists produced a spectacle of light and space that emphasized the city’s exuberant consumer culture. Although the title of the performance uses the term ‘environment,’ Judy Chicago describes this event as part of her investigation of ‘atmospheres,’ which is distinct from Kaprow’s investigation of ‘environments’ discussed in this paper as Kaprow’s interest in the built environment. For more on Chicago see Lacy, Suzanne and Jennifer Flores Sernand. “Voices, Variations and Deviations From the LACE archive of southern California performance art.” In Live Art in LA Performance in Southern California, 1970-1983. Ed. Peggy Phelan (New York: Routledge, 2012):64.


13 Allan Kaprow was highly influenced by American philosopher John Dewey and wanted to “take life’s meanings from outside art and inside common experience.” Kaprow, Allan, and Jeff Kelley, 13.


15 Inspired in part by John Cage’s chance experimentation and Kaprow’s call to keep the line between art and life as “fluid and perhaps as indistinct as possible.”

16 Kaprow’s interest in the ‘everyday’ was also visible in his desire to root Happenings within the broad social and cultural current of the sixties. In “Pinpointing Happenings” he situates “Happenings” alongside Bobby Kennedy, Hippie groups, party-game kits, slogans to popular radio stations, and the Supremes, in order to position “happenings” as a celebratory form
of social, political, cultural and artistic liberation and firmly outside of the institutional context of the art world.


20 Inspired in part by John Cage’s chance experimentation and Kaprow’s happenings, the founders of Drop City, according to Ellisa Auther, in *West of Center*, originally began rehearsing for Drop City by staging “Drop Art,” that took on the ethos of Cage and Kaprow by dropping large objects off a building to see how they would drop in the street. See. Author, Elissa, and Adam Lerner. West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965-1977. Denver, Colo.: Published in cooperation with the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, 2012, p.32.


23 The definition of site-specificity used here is taken from Rosalyn Deutsche,’s extended definition of the term. She explains the term site-specificity came to inherit a site’s social, political and symbolic context. Described as a technique that was originally developed to bring art outside of its institutional frames, site-specific work underwent permutations in the sixties and seventies to include “the discursive and historical circumstances within which artwork, spectator and site are situated.” Deutsche, Rosalyn. "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City." October (Cambridge, Mass.), 47-47 (1989): 84-90. For more on site-specificity, see Kwon, Miwon *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002.

24 A lack of transporation infrastructure prevented access to the rest of LA’s “economy”, perpetuating the poverty within the neighborhood.


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ADAPTIVE REUSE AND THE MARKETING OF DOWNTOWN LA LIVING: THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW URBANITY

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INTRODUCTION

Los Angeles has recently experienced a kind of “urban renaissance” in the dramatic revitalization of its downtown through adaptive reuse tactics that has led to an active branding of the neighbourhood. The aim of this paper is to analyse both adaptive reuse as a planning strategy and the branding of the “new downtown living” associated with it. We posit that a new urbanity is being constructed by a specific set of decision-makers and also through a marketing discourse that we analyse in this paper. We first explain what adaptive reuse is and who the stakeholders involved are in the regeneration of Downtown Los Angeles. After stating the outcomes of the strategy, our aim is to present how the branding of the city centre is now displaying values that are part of the construction of a new urbanity for Downtown Los Angeles. This new urbanity for the central core is part of a broader strategy to retrofit the city towards a more sustainable urban form. New urbanity has been previously identified by Gualini and Majoor as “a new urban policy” that emphasizes “economic development and inter-urban competition” as part of a shift towards market-oriented pursuits. This involves a subsequent “new era” of infill and redevelopment within urban cores as opposed to outward low-density expansion. This additionally challenges the previous notion of the Los Angeles School of Urbanism that suggests a dispersed polycentric urban form and a fragmentation of the city in both its physical and social aspects. However, it should be noted that the construction of this new urbanity in Los Angeles is not constructed with reference to large-scale flagship urban projects but has happened through an incremental market-led process.

ADAPTIVE REUSE AS A PLANNING STRATEGY

Adaptive reuse has been implemented in different parts of the world, appearing in mainstream architecture vernacular during the 1960s and 1970s as a response to emerging environmental concerns. It can generally be defined as “a process to ameliorate the financial, environmental and social performance of buildings...that changes a disused or ineffective item into a new item that can be used for a different purpose.” This process for reusing buildings contributes to sustainability through the mitigation of CO2 emissions. The built environment has a prominent role to play in the debate on sustainable development and climate change as it demands 40% of global resources and also generates a high amount of waste.

The key component in adaptive reuse projects lies in the previous use of a land or building no longer being suitable with regards to the building itself or its location. By reinterpreting the use to something that is more appropriate for present conditions, the value of the property is ideally increased or
maximized. The reuse of buildings can include a range of modifications from relating solely to aesthetics to a complete overhaul of a building, including actions such as partial redevelopment of the building to maintain a façade. In the context of U.S cities, as stated by Young, adaptive reuse has become a preferred way of regenerating the downtowns of cities devastated by the decline of American manufacturing. Young states that this type of strategy does not engender a high cost to the city: “[adaptive reuse] can be seen as an economic incentive for developers willing to bring new life in economically depressed areas…[it is intended] to ease the challenging permit requirements and rezoning processes developers are forced to endure.” Our interviews in Los Angeles confirm this point: adaptive reuse starts with an action of the city, but afterwards it is a market-driven process where the developers are the leading stakeholders.

Recycling buildings through the process of reuse has continually proved to be an important and effective historic preservation tool. Industrial buildings in particular, are especially well-suited for adaptive reuse practices due to their large and open spaces, as well as the majority of these buildings acting as architectural or vernacular relics from the industrial era. It was through the decline of many kinds of heavy industry during the early and mid-twentieth century that a multitude of abandoned and underutilized industrial buildings and sites have become available as potential high-value reuse projects in North American cities.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODS

Our research question is twofold and as follows: How is the product of adaptive reuse being marketed and why? Can we identify the construction of a new urbanity for Downtown LA?

More than fifteen interviews have been conducted in Los Angeles both in Downtown LA and in the Arts District on the adaptive reuse process and outcomes. We additionally analysed marketing material for lofts sold in Downtown LA, as well as the some of the websites displaying this new urbanity discourse (e.g., the Downtown Centre Improvement Business District).

THE RATIONALE AND OUTCOMES OF ADAPTIVE REUSE IN LA

One of the earliest codes that would encourage reuse-related practices within the state of California and become highly relevant to the case of Los Angeles was the California Historical Building Code (CHBC) passed in 1976. This code was the first of its kind in the nation, protecting the state’s architectural heritage through recognizing the unique construction issues relevant to historic buildings. Building regulations and standards within this alternative code are specifically targeted towards rehabilitation, preservation, restoration, relocation or change of occupancy of designated historic buildings. In order to be utilized, a building must be locally designated as historic or listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Los Angeles has retained one of the nation’s most intact historic downtown areas, due to a lack of demolition that occurred in its seemingly forgotten downtown; this is unlike many other American cities that followed typical urban renewal tactics.

Historic preservation increasingly became endorsed as an economic revitalization tool during the late 1990s. Enacted in June 1999, the city adopted what would later become a milestone in legislation encouraging the conversation of the majority of Downtown’s historic office buildings into apartments, lofts, and hotels. This legislation was known as the Adaptive Reuse Ordinance (ARO), initially expected to be applied only to Downtown, though later expanding to other parts of the city within a few years. The ARO took approximately three years to materialize with the initial idea emerging in July 1996 in a workshop held by the Central City Association. The focus of the ARO is the
revitalization of the downtown area’s cultural resources, as well as attempting to address the housing crisis within the city. The ordinance works to increase the ease in obtaining a building permit through a more streamlined process, which has resulted in the creation of several thousand new housing units that are served by transit and existing infrastructure. Bernstein states that the ARO “played the most important role” in the dramatic transformation from desertion to revitalization within Downtown L.A.

Furthering the ARO initiative: activism and opportunity

The Los Angeles Conservancy, a preservation activist group advocating for the protection and rehabilitation of derelict historic structures in the city and county of Los Angeles, is one of the most significant catalysts for the success in adaptive reuse the city would soon experience. Shortly after the enactment of the ARO, the group authored its own blueprint for Downtown revitalization entitled “The Broadway Initiative” and mentioned the creation of a twenty-four hour district through the conversion of vacant office space into residential apartments as a primary goal.

The Conservancy shifted its policy focus to housing creation in the Historic Core area, furthering this initiative through the commissioning of a task force of architects and engineers who would assess the potential for reuse of 273 buildings in the area. This study, carried out in April 2000, would come to be known as the Historic Core Housing Survey; it was able to identify fifty buildings suitable for conversion to housing outlined in the blueprint. The Historic Core Housing Survey was an early demonstration of the potential inherent in historic buildings in Downtown and the city itself.

The first project carried out under the ARO was undertaken by Gilmore Associates in what is now touted as the highly successful Old Bank District. The project consists of four formerly abandoned and historic office buildings transformed into over 230 rental apartments with commercial uses on the ground level. These buildings include the San Fernando building (1907), the Hellman Building (1902), the Continental Building (1904) and the Farmers and Merchants Bank (1905). Following its success, several other developers quickly followed suit in the reuse movement in the area and the Old Bank District project would act as the primary precedent and catalyst for further redevelopment that would spur the dramatic revitalization of Downtown. However, we should say that this success was not guaranteed; the Los Angeles Conservancy played a major role in implementing and marketing the ordinance.

Outcomes of revitalization through the ARO

While the introduction of the ARO brought large amounts of housing to Downtown through reuse tactics and stimulated the revitalization of the area and preservation of its heritage resources greatly, it did not come without its consequences. Concerns regarding the gentrification of Downtown have become common, as the displacement of low-income residents coupled with a lack of new affordable housing has produced an increasingly divided neighbourhood. An entirely new demographic has been drawn to Downtown through high levels of investment from developers undertaking adaptive reuse projects that have transformed certain areas into chic urban spaces.

Generating sustainable development through adaptive reuse while also providing continuity of social inclusiveness and cohesion is challenging. Because reuse projects require large upfront costs, developers often attempt to make their money back faster through high rental fees. Policies targeted specifically towards the effects of adaptive reuse, including loss of affordable housing and rent increases, should be considered and explored to mitigate the negative aspects related to gentrification.
within these processes. These types of gentrification issues may be lessened through reuse projects that are devoted to keeping communities intact by considering low-income residents or incentivizing proprietors to maintain the community.\textsuperscript{27} Evidently, there is a tangible tension between historic preservation, affordable housing, and the creation of mixed-income communities.\textsuperscript{28}

Gentrification related to adaptive reuse that produces housing development targeted towards higher-income groups than those in the surrounding area can be categorized as “new-build” gentrification, as opposed to “standard” gentrification.\textsuperscript{29} Gentrification issues appear to be common in relation to many kinds of adaptive reuse projects. When rapid physical transformation occurs in historic core areas, gentrification is a feature that usually presents itself. This conflict arguably requires consideration of preservation of cultural heritage related to an existing community alongside the preservation of heritage structures. When adaptive reuse projects become highly successful in short amounts of time, it becomes much more difficult to do so.

While adaptive reuse can be seen as an advantageous green enterprise with significantly lower environmental costs in comparison to new construction and demolition, there is a risk of detrimental effects pertaining to social equity issues and lack of affordable housing available.\textsuperscript{30} The increasing influx of higher-income and wealthy residents into these new residential developments has produced an exacerbated spatial proximity of social realities that are highly polarized.\textsuperscript{31} At the same time, older buildings that are suitable for reuse are often significant aesthetic, cultural, and economic resources.\textsuperscript{32} It is imperative to maintain and utilize these structures wherever possible. The ARO resulted in seventy-six projects in Downtown alone producing 9,137 units of new Downtown housing, including 2,479 condominium units.\textsuperscript{33}

THE MARKETING: “LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY” OR THE RE-CONCEPTUALIZATION OF URBAN VALUES

In this section we examine how Downtown LA living has been branded by analysing the marketing discourse displayed through the Downtown BIA’s website and the imagery used in the advertising of loft apartments. Brett Martin states “...what Downtown L.A. is trying to become: a Great City in the heart of a city that destroyed cities,”\textsuperscript{34} but is this really the case?

The marketing of Downtown living includes a variety of themes: community, entertainment (dining, sports, etc.) and culture. In this sense, the marketing displays and sells a new conceptualisation of the city that is more individualistic and no longer based on traditional values (alterity, social mixity, diversity) as illustrated in Jane Jacobs’ or Lewis Mumford’s formative works on “urbanity.” To the contrary, advertisements for loft apartments are targeting hedonist single young professionals as displayed in Figure 1.
As stated by Zukin in *Naked City*, the concept of “authenticity” has migrated from a quality of people, to quality of things and to a quality of experiences.\(^{\text{35}}\) This is unerringly how Downtown LA is now being celebrated: as a place where different experiences are possible. The Downtown BIA is branding Downtown LA as a place where you get your “cultural fix,” “rejuvenate yourself,” or experience the “Vibrant City” or “the downtown by night.”\(^{\text{36}}\) The new downtown dweller is enjoying a marketed culture and can experience different cities within one. Downtown LA is branded as a multifaceted urban environment that is safe and well-connected to transit.

We maintain that the traditional idea of what is a city is now being challenged. In the imagery and discourse displayed in the marketing ads, the individuals presented are part of an urban tribe and evidently do not represent everyone (e.g. the single with a dog, the young couple, etc.). The marketing of lofts located in Downtown LA is clearly targeted towards a specific category of the population. This statement concurs with concepts associated with the postmodern society: “tribes developed around preferences and lifestyles and are replacing social classes.”\(^{\text{37}}\) The way Downtown LA is being marketed fits well with the way the postmodern consumer is being depicted: “the postmodern consumer is more active than its modern predecessor, in constant search of stimulation through events and images, experiences and pleasure are important, the postmodern consumer is engaged in different lifestyles.”\(^{\text{38}}\) In other words, the new Downtown LA dweller - as portrayed in the marketing of lofts -
is the antithesis of a key figure of modernity and urbanization, the flâneur: “the detached observer, a pleasure-seeking stroller...a loiterer, frittering away time.” This concurs with the identification of the postmodern agenda as reconsidering the significance of the city centre and acknowledging the potential for the consumption of increasingly marketed culture. This rediscovery of the city centre in a city which has continually and forcefully expanded its edges outward through automobile dependency is evidently significant.

**Table 1. Defining Downtown LA urbanity against modern and postmodern archetypes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Modern metropolis</th>
<th>Postmodern urbanity</th>
<th>Downtown LA urbanity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>Diversity/social mix (key figures of the flâneur and the stranger)</td>
<td>Privatopia/enclaves/edge cities as a new urbanity</td>
<td>Urbanity “À la Carte”/single young professionals are the target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economy</strong></td>
<td>Progressive decentralization towards the suburbs</td>
<td>Dominant role of edge cities</td>
<td>Recentralization towards the city centre, concentration of economic activities in selected hubs (transit-oriented development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governance</strong></td>
<td>Top-down</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning</strong></td>
<td>Functional zoning</td>
<td>“Laissez faire” High tech corridors</td>
<td>Retrofitting the city, strengthening the urban core with the “Live, Work, and Play” concept</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: Authors’ research.

In Table 1 we illustrate that adaptive reuse is the starting point for a new model of urbanity for Los Angeles. This will be achieved through the “Re:code LA” zoning code revision initiative, which will begin in the Downtown; it will be a two year process that will serve as a pilot project. This project outlines the following priorities: 1. Distinct neighbourhoods; 2. Housing affordability and diversity; 3. Centres and corridors; 4. Transportation choices; 5. Jobs and innovation; 6. A strong core; 7. A healthy city. “Re:code LA” is also part of a long-term goal of retrofitting LA into a transit-oriented city.

**CONCLUSION**

As indicated by Bernstein, critics have been concerned with the displacement of low-income groups and the limited opportunities for providing affordable housing. In fact, only 797 units created out of 9000 units were produced as affordable housing. However, the ARO is also recognised as one of the most successful strategies in most recent years as the ARO’s formula combines historic preservation and economic development. In this paper we displayed that adaptive reuse strategies in the downtown have been the starting point of a retrofit of the city towards sustainable development. Nonetheless, the way Downtown LA living is marketed participated to the construction of a new urbanity that may not be shared or embraced by all if strategies are not implemented to counteract the negative effects of gentrification. While it is true that “the greenest building is the one that already exists,” the benefits related to sustainability inherent in reuse projects must be accurately weighed.
with the potential negative impacts on the existing social and cultural fabric. Future research may be guided by this notion of attempted balance through policies and strategies in examining the potentially powerful gentrifying features of adaptive reuse, as demonstrated in this paper. Can a middle ground be identified or even achieved in some form within this context?

To directly respond to our initial research question: Downtown LA living is marketed to attract high income population groups/visitors in the downtown. The new urbanity that has been created contradicts the very notion of “urbanity” and highlights the growing complexity of the LA condition. We end by suggesting further research in careful examination of the impacts of this new urbanity in Downtown LA and consideration of this as a potentially new archetype for the city’s traditionally polycentric, fragmented urbanism.
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IMITATION OF LIFE: THE SIMULATION OF THE EVERYDAY AS A POLITICAL EXPRESSION

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the great range of political and aesthetic implications it incorporates, the notion of everyday life is often formulated from architectural theory purely as a critical argument against architects’ estrangement from the ‘real’ life of the city. In this paper I’d like to overcome this critique by unveiling unexplored ways in which the idea of the everyday has produced relevant architectural results within contemporary aesthetic regimes. In doing so I’ll attempt to challenge the typical association between authenticity, social critique and everyday, by suggesting that it is, paradoxically, through imitations of the spatial practices and the images of everyday life, how modern and contemporary architectures have achieved to embody certain political contents. For this I’ll use two projects known as paradigmatic of participation in architecture: The Byker Wall by Ralph Erskine and the Maison Médicale by Lucien Kroll, that also share a moment, the late sixties, in which the critical notion of the everyday was probably going through its maximum political relevance during modernity.

The reconsideration of everyday life re-emerges in the contemporary discourse of architecture during the nineties as a programmatic critique against the most accepted ways of practice of the discipline. An automatic product of this critique is the search for alternative design tactics that shorten the gap between reality and architecture. But this is not an easy or even a new task. According to Margaret Crawford, we may pursue it by “eliminating the distance between professionals and users, specialized knowledge and daily experience”1, forcing the architect to “address the contradictions of social life from close up.”2 This movement towards a more open and complex reality not only goes beyond the traditional notion of architectural context and, therefore, leaves us out of our comfort zone. It is also, and more importantly, a politically focused shift.

If we, as architects, stand in front of the question of contemporary everydayness, we must necessarily react to what Henri Lefebvre and Guy Debord identified as the colonization of everyday life3, pointing at the fact that our basic daily activities, such as cooking, driving a car, buying groceries, taking a bus or having a coffee, have been fully occupied by the dynamics of consumption and, therefore, have become simultaneously political and aesthetic. Along the same lines and openly following Lefebvre, Alice Kaplan and Kristin Ross consider that “the political is hidden” within “the most banal and repetitive gestures of everyday life”4, which is also where we can look for its critical alternatives: “It is in the midst of the utterly ordinary, in the space where the dominant relations of production are tirelessly and relentlessly reproduced, where we must look for utopian and political aspirations to crystallize.”5

If the critique of the social reality of capitalism and the promise for its transformation are embedded within the spatial practices of everyday life, we may assume that the everyday becomes some kind of political proof of realism for architecture and urban design. Which raises the question whether an architecture that addresses the contingency of the everyday will inevitably become political, and “resistant to the commodification/consumption paradigm that has become dominant.”6

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Small Narratives and Negotiated Utopia

Despite its complexity, the critical nature of the spaces of the everyday is usually approached merely in terms of authenticity: the quotidian as the pure expression of real life opposed to the imposture of the official city built by politicians and architects. According to the triad in which Lefebvre divides the notion of space as a social product, the perceived space, defined by its physical structure, and the lived space, defined by social interaction, are the most direct translations of this authentic reality of the city. Contrarily, the conceived spaces in Lefebvre’s triad, the ones designed by architects or promoted by politicians, "too easily evolve into the production of fixed ideals." However, it is precisely on the overlapping of the three spaces of the triad, authentic or not, where space is fully defined as the result of the capitalist productive organization.

In the debates about the problems and possibilities of participatory architecture that took place during the late sixties, similar questions were being discussed. The redistribution of power implicit in participation opened a critical perspective over the role of the architect who, thanks to a disproportionate influence over the ‘conceived space’, could impose a private, therefore inauthentic, agenda on the everyday life of the citizens. Consequently, some of the most critical discussions about the reasons why participatory processes weren’t always successful had to do with its political authenticity. A massive critical response was raised regarding the reality of the democracy of some processes and, therefore, questioning the legitimacy of participation as an effective political tool.

A well-known example is the ladder of participation proposed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969, in which eight possible levels of participation were classified on a vertical scale, from manipulation on the lowest level, to citizen control on the highest, or placation in the middle. Arnstein suggests a linear criterion of legitimacy, in which the architectural results of the project or its actual social success are never assessed. Only the political conditions are considered, presuming that redistribution of power always guarantees positive transformative results. An illustration of this way of thinking is the assessment as a process of false participation of the large development built by Ralph Erskine in Newcastle and known as The Byker Wall (1969-1975): “Perhaps the most cynical example of the architects own ideas masquerading as the outcome of a participatory process is Byker Wall. This is clearly an ‘Erskine building’ and not something designed collectively by the Byker’s residents. Yet an elaborate charade was gone through of setting up the architect’s branch office in the community.”

Figure 1. Ralph Erskine, 1976. Drawing of a semi-public courtyard in Byker, Newcastle.
Against this somehow narrow mode of critique, I’d like to propose an alternative perspective to examine participatory processes as conflictive spaces of encounter between everyday life, politics and architecture. With that end I’ll shift the discussion from the notion of authenticity, automatically related to legitimacy, to the sphere of fiction, almost its opposite. In the case of Byker, we could argue that the type of fiction that explains its political agenda and its architectural grammar belongs to the field of realism. As in Andre Bazin’s analysis of De Sica’s ‘Bicycle thief’, despite the intricacy of the formal internal mechanisms and the intensity of the social problematic at stake, both become transparent in the final result. They remain buried within an architecture that we perceive as natural, even if it’s composed of a carefully designed collection of formal gestures. A spatial narrative made of small everyday stories that artificially construct the perception of a normal life. In similar terms, as narratives of the streets, Jeremy Till explains how in design processes with citizen participation, “the role of the architect becomes that of understanding and drawing out the spatial implications of urban storytelling.” These small stories incorporate into the project as a form of “indeterminacy and contingency” that needs to be translated by the architect who, far from reducing his responsibility as some have suggested, is more demanded as a designer than ever. Consequently, “the architect, as negotiator of hope initiated through urban storytelling, is thus much more than a mere technical facilitator.”

In most of the drawings developed along the years for Byker, we can notice the overlapping of the small stories of the lived space with the conceived space of architectural form. The figures of the different groups of people are represented as importantly as the built masses. This isn’t merely an issue of graphic communication. More likely, it’s as if the contents of architecture found within actions rather than within spaces would require us to build a fiction, a narrative imitation of reality, to express them. Hence the paradox: it seems that the architectures originated from everyday life can only be effectively incarnated by fictions, where the ideological discourse becomes transparent. An illustrative example of a similar realist narrative, can be found on the drawings for the new village of La Martella, designed by Ludovico Quaroni in 1951, where we easily recognize the archetypes from the classic films of Italian Neorealism. But the social atmosphere of the drawings and the way the characters are treated as caricatures reveals the difference between the political ideals behind La Martella and those promoted in Byker. Such ideals, absent in other neorealist expressions, but essential to neorealist urbanism, were based on the paternalist reintroduction of rural life on the new postwar urban neighborhoods, following the ideology of the ruling Christian Democratic party and far from the consensus-oriented solutions of Social Democracy.

The same technique we’ve found on Erskine’s graphic storytelling -the overlapping of different conditions and narratives into a complex composite-, is applied to every layer of the project, always staging the illusory complexity of a shared life: the high raise overlapped with small density cores, the old symbolic buildings with the new modern housing, a monumental gesture of the wall with a micro cosmos of semipublic spaces; all of them parts of a complex equilibrium that reflects the idea of a negotiated social balance. According to John Kaliski this inclusiveness is also distinctive of contemporary everyday life, which “accepts the new, the old, the present, the simulated, and the spectacular within a framework of everyday situations.” But the micro-narratives of urban storytelling are interconnected in Byker by the construction of a wider political fiction: the negotiated utopia of the social-democratic welfare state that Erskine had experienced in Sweden.
An enormous effort was made by Erskine and his team to simulate the effects of a complex reality, as if the development would have been implemented along decades, growing slowly and organically. This approach epitomizes one of the critical alternatives to architectural modernity, that of the architect as a craftsman, against technical repetition or any sort of generic forms. That is why, despite the great variety and intensity of its form and materiality, the notion of time in Byker somehow denotes a slow pace. The double dialectic history/modernity and design/occupation is resolved, unlike most of the modern architecture of the sixties, as a balanced landscape. The physical structure of the neighborhood seems to function as a stabilized system of spontaneity, in which even if anything seems changeable through bricolage—different new doors and fences have been added with time—, nothing really affects the global picture. Even the current, and unexpected, occupation of most of the pedestrian streets by cars, doesn’t seem to undermine its social atmosphere or its constructed political expression as a negotiated utopia.

Constructing the Image of Revolt

If, as Fredric Jameson has stated, the aesthetic expression of a political ideal has two possible forms, utopian or subversive\(^{17}\), the *Maison Médicale* (1969-72) designed by Lucien Kroll, would certainly fit on the second group. Together with the Byker Wall, the Mémé, as it is usually known, is one of the few examples of participatory architecture of the sixties and seventies that synthesized a political process on a consistent and innovative architectural language. In many ways, the Mémé can be interpreted as the next step after Byker. If the architect in Byker was a craftsman constructing a negotiated utopia, in the *Maison Médicale* we might say that Kroll was an activist\(^ {18}\) decided to invent the architectural image of political revolt. Strongly influenced by the politics of its time, the buildings that composed the Mémé were without any doubt, “a delayed product of 1968, the year of revolution and protest”\(^ {19}\).

Moreover, the specific circumstances that surrounded the commission for Kroll were also decisive: The project itself was born from a conflict between the students and the administration of the Catholic University of Louvain, in which Kroll always allied with the students: “They supported us in conflicts, took part in discussions with officialdom, and organized demonstrations against university’s alternative project”\(^ {20}\). In this context, the aesthetic discourse of social revolution, the radical expression of freedom and disagreement with the status quo becomes the main theme of Kroll’s project. Leading to an architectural implementation of this discourse as the “disorder”\(^ {21}\) of the built form “which, not being institutionalized, renews itself continually, constantly reinventing images of a
reality in transformation\textsuperscript{22}. The radical interpretation of the everyday routines of the students: “I get up, wash, it’s cold, the neighbor’s radio annoys me, I go to get bread…\textsuperscript{23}, revealed as a fertile material for an experimental approach to a residential program and as the antidote for institutionalization.

In Byker Erskine combined a model of participation based first on consultation, and then on an ultra-customization of the design meant to carefully translate each of the desires of the neighbors. Consequently, the team of architects was forced to produce a disproportionately large amount of detailed variations\textsuperscript{24} so, even within the great variety of formal solutions, the consistency and equilibrium were kept. There is an essential divergence in the way Lucien Kroll tackled the issue of difference and technology in the Mémé. Kroll constructs an architectural image to embody the idea of constant revolution, of an ever-lasting fight for freedom: there is neither possible equilibrium nor utopia. But the refutation of the “authoritarian and repressive condition”\textsuperscript{25} of the system requires the illusion of spontaneity and flexibility when, in reality, the formal disorder of the building is a direct consequence of a very precise system of control.

The design of an irregular structural scheme following what Kroll calls “the wandering columns”\textsuperscript{26}, will determine the size of every other element attached to it, making impossible a perception of order or a sense of control. The freedom to use any size of window, or even to ‘do it yourself’, is not simply a way to delegate power of design. It is, in fact, a way of securing a very well planned effect of disorder, which is surprisingly similar in different scales: in the general volumetric organization designed by Kroll, and in the cloud of smaller and lighter elements attached to it.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure3.jpg}
\caption{Lucien Kroll, 1972. Maison Médicale, Brussels}
\end{figure}

\textbf{The Limits of Architecture as a Political Activity}

The interpretation of the Mémé and the Byker Wall as buildings conceived from simulations doesn’t diminish their relevance as political architectures. If anything, it reinforces them; it identifies them as pioneering projects in the development of alternative strategies to express the transformative potential of the practices of the everyday. Let’s now briefly examine, through this same lens, the very recent trend of participatory urban design and public space reclamation strategies. Successful Practices like
the French collective Atelier d'architecture autogérée or the Spanish office Ecosistema Urbano, have worked consistently in rebuilding the idea of a more democratic urban citizenship through the design of temporary structures or collective urban actions.

The social and economic context of the recent financial crisis, as well as the influence of movements such as Occupy Wall Street, have stimulated the restoration of the notion of participatory design, that had been neglected for decades. But, how politically critical are these new proposals after all? Undoubtedly they are more than just a new aesthetic trend, they contain a substantial political focus that we may easily connect to Henri Lefebvre’s ideas in The Right to the City. But, is this enough? We can find a revealing example on the recent project for a park in Oslo, by German landscape architect Silke Volkert. The potentially subversive re-appropriation of a former landfill by people, is resolved as a benevolent environmentalist utopia, expressed through a set of images of fictional everyday actions that show groups of active and happy citizens working on urban gardens. As in many other recent projects, this proposal embodies the appropriation of the critical agenda of environmentalist politics by official and corporate culture, through the representation of an ideally green everydayness.

Moreover, this focus entails the disbelief in an architecture capable of radically transform reality by itself. Instead, it suggests its development into a mutable discipline that has to adapt carefully to the changing dynamics of contemporary society and become acceptable to be somehow influential, rather than challenging the status quo. Therefore, the new architecture of participation doesn’t really need to be formulated in formal or material terms - the space of the park virtually disappears on the drawings-, as the radical architects form the sixties did. Instead, it opens a different model of practice that embraces fiction and politics non-traumatic fashion, recovering the idea of architect as an activist, but without a fixed ideological agenda.
Conclusion

As a conclusion, I’d like to shortly describe a case of citizen participation that might raise some final questions and, maybe, enlighten the importance of the political image of architecture nowadays. In the urban experiment of El Campo de la Cebada, in Madrid, an available urban void has been spontaneously appropriated by local community groups, which in a self-organized structure are programming the space for all sorts of events and activities until the void is filled, in the near future, by a new construction. These activities, most of them part of the everyday life of the neighborhood, have naturally generated different temporary architectures that have successively occupied the space of the void. It’s a model of participation without a stable architectural image or a recognizable political narrative. In the ultimate phase of participation, apparently, there is no need for design nor ideology. There is no fiction, no simulation of the complexity of life. Instead of an architecture that imitates reality, it’s the social reality that has invaded the city and made architecture, finally, irrelevant, opening a new set of questions: Do these experiment show us the limits of architecture as a political activity? Can we still rely, as Erskine and Kroll did, on the construction of architectural image as the incarnation of political agendas? Are there new ways to reintroduce architecture, beyond activism, as a legitimate political medium to deal with the instability of contemporary everyday life?

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TIMES SQUARE’S STREET SECTION AND THE GHOSTED SILVER SCREEN

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The evolution of movie houses may be revealed as useful for analysis of the cities . . . from now on architecture is only a movie.

Paul Virilio, The Aesthetics of Disappearance

[The] screen is empty, and thus qualifies either as the everything of all possible images or else as their nothingness as vehicles of illusion.

Hans Belting, “Theaters of Illusion,” in Hiroshi Sugimoto, Theaters

INTRODUCTION

The current public space of New York City’s Times Square is a product of the media that inhabited the site over the course of its history. Times Square epitomizes the transformation of media into urban fabric—the translation of an intangible social and sensual experience into a realized urban form. This transformation culminated in the conversion of the filmic screen into a building typology.

The history of Times Square reveals a constant metamorphosis of the ruling mode of entertainment. These different media not only acted as instruments of leisure, but also served as political devices, constructing a collective narrative in support of the site’s reputation.

Founded on the programmatic adjacency of theater and prostitution activity, Times Square was established on a psychological split between potential fantasy and manifested fantasy. While the legitimate theaters served the former, the illegitimate activity of prostitution provided the latter. In this context, the theater, which was the first media to govern the site, sustained a double role. Psychologically, it evoked fantasies; politically, it served the image of the site as a “theater district.”

With the rise of film and the conversion of theaters into movie houses, the visual image took on a central role in entertainment. Over time, this change in the status of the visual image produced an essential social paradigmatic shift in the relationship between the visual and the political images. Once opposed, the visual and political images of the site were eventually conflated.

Two critical moments in the evolution of the site are particularly important to understanding the collapse between Times Square's visual and political images. The first is the origin of the site in 1904, which is responsible for its mythological inscription in the collective memory. The second is the 1980-2001 42nd Street Development Plan (42DP), which implemented a new building typology and dramatically changed the shape and characteristics of Times Square's public space.

While the mythological image of the site was dominated by the media of theater, the phenomenological inscription of the filmic screen into the new building typology reveals both the social inversion of the fantasized and the realized, and the urban inversion of materialization and dematerialization in relation to the urban psyche of Times Square.
THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGE IN RELATION TO THE LITERAL AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL SCREENS

Officially announced on April 8, 1904, Times Square emerged following two events: the erection of the *New York Times* Tower, and the opening of the Interborough Rapid Transit Station. Though it was announced as a new site, Times Square did not begin as a tabula rasa. Prior to the erection of the tower and the station, the site—then called Longacre Square—consisted of two hotels, five theaters, and thirty-eight brothels. There were an additional seventy houses of prostitution nearby.

In spite of the fact that the number of brothels surpassed the number of theaters at its inception, Times Square was labeled a "theater district." The legitimate theater, which served as a camouflage for illegitimate activity, originated the gap between actuality and the collective image. A further reinforcement of the site's image manifested through its semantic and formal arrangements. While the Broad-way was governed by the theaters, the narrow-ways were governed by houses of prostitution.

The construction of a mythological image of Times Square as "theater district" was intended to compensate for the violent transition between the fantasized and the realized and was linked to the ruling media. While the dominant media changed, its psychological role producing fantasy, and its political role in constructing an ideal image of Times Square, persevered.

**Theater District 1899-1929: The Stage**

From 1899 until approximately its third decade, Times Square's identity as transportation hub and emerging cultural icon resulted in a rapid flourishing of theaters at the intersection of Broadway and 42nd Street. At its peak in 1927, Times Square encompassed at least eighty-five theaters. By the turn of the century, the area became what Lynne B. Sagalyn calls "America's great central marketplace for commercial culture," and served as a national entertainment center.

As the dominant media, theater shaped the interiority of the site. Its phenomenological significance stems from the inscription of the theater as a spatial unit in collective memory. This unit was based on given dimensions for height, length and depth and on an oval shape, which was linked to catharsis—the audience's emotional reaction to the drama on stage.

Not only were the interior theater units built around a literal stage, but a phenomenological stage dominated the site's exteriority. The site's public space was characterized by a wide ground plan and a dramatic section. The section was based on a sole vertical member (Times Tower) situated in the center of a perspectival picture plane as an actor on a stage.


Film District 1930-1944: The Screen

By the 1930s, Times Square's popularity created the potential for new and expanded business. As land values rose, legitimate theaters, which were low in density and tailored to a single use, failed to generate sufficient revenues. In response, theater owners introduced vaudeville, burlesque, and—most significantly—moving images. The conversion of theaters into movie houses was not merely a change in media but also, and more importantly, a paradigmatic social, perceptual and phenomenological shift from stage to screen.

The silver screen prevailed in the theaters' interior space, and commercial screens began to shape the site's exterior public space. The street screen emerged as an extension of Times Tower: a vertical iconic member, responsible for reputation through a literal image. The intersection of the literal and phenomenological screens marks the beginning of the conflation of the two types of images, the visual and the political.
The arrival of film rendered futile the traditional division between the fantasized and the realized. A new mode of virtuality emerged: the cinematic screen, which embodied the collision between materiality and immateriality,10 the virtual and the real,11 and the lived and perceived.12

The screen as a site of collision has been studied extensively by many twentieth-century cultural theorists. In his 1941 *Space, Time and Architecture,*13 Siegried Giedion coined the term "Space-Time"14 to refer to the unification of space and time in relation to new modes of representation.15 While Giedion's work explored the intersection of space and time on a scientific basis, later writers including Paul Virilio applied the idea specifically to film. Virilio probed the screen from a poetic perspective, describing it as, "The passage from something material to something that is not."16 In *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (1980), he explored the concept of "dematerialization" in relation to the way by which the filmic screen distorts time and corrodes space. He observed "the gap of what is invisible between frames,"17 and described it as "a disappearance that produces a new register of appearance."18 Virilio examined the filmic screen not only as a site of collision—of materiality and immateriality—but also as a site of construction—as a disappearance that produces an appearance.

While Virilio dealt with the screen, French philosopher Roland Barthes considered the image. Although the former discussed the media and the latter its effect, they both read their subject as a site of collision, which is also a site of construction. For Barthes the collision is between the images of "self" and "other," and the construction is, therefore, a construction of the self-image in relation to the "other." Using the logic of the Lacanian Mirror Stage to describe the fascination of the filmic image, Barthes wrote, "I press my nose against the screen's mirror, against the 'other' image-repertoire with which I narcissistically identify myself."19 He observed the hypnotic effect of the filmic image as an intersection of the imaginary—the mirror stage's simultaneous experience of identification with, and separation from, the "other" —and ideology, which is, according to him, a fixed image of society.

The primary significance of the mirror metaphor in relation to the filmic screen is the emergence of a social image, in the form of visuality. In this sense, the confusion between the two types of images in Times Square (visual and political) can be read as a result of the total identification with the filmic image and the replacement of the realized by the fantasized.

**Crime District 1944-1980: The Exteriorized Screen**

In the 1940s, the obsolescence of the conventional theater prompted the emergence of new forms of entertainment. The theaters on West 42nd Street specialized in "grinders," which emphasized action and violence to appeal to male audiences. Grinders brought a new commercial language to the street, characterized by garish marquees, sexually suggestive posters, and bizarre devices to lure patrons. The site's reputation suffered a rapid decline.
In terms of the relation between the visual image and image of the site, this time in the evolution of Times Square marks the greatest distance between the two: While the visual image flourished, the site's reputation reached its severest decline.

THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN IN RELATION TO THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL SCREEN

By its fourth decade, Times Square was caught between two forces: legislation and continued decline. Since 1937 Manhattan city planners had focused on eradicating crime and sleaze through a series of legislation and zoning regulations. Yet Times Square appeared to be out of control. By the beginning of the 1980s, the tension between the legislators' aims and the impotence of their actions was inscribed within the collective memory in a way that produced actual change. And by the turn of the twenty-first century, after twenty years of planning and negotiations, Times Square emerged as a reimagined Times Square.²⁰

Two programs were responsible for Times Square's redevelopment.²¹ The Special Midtown Zoning District dealt with the area between 40th and 57th Streets from Eighth to Sixth Avenue and was introduced to mitigate the threat to traditional theaters posed by high-rise development. It offered to increase the allowable floor area of a building up to twenty percent in return for the construction of a legitimate theater.²² Nineteen new commercial buildings were built under these terms in Times Square alone.²³

The 42DP (which was initiated in the 1980s, executed during the 1990s, and completed by the turn of the century) dealt specifically with the two and a half blocks (from 39th to 42nd Streets) that define the entrance to Times Square.²⁴ The redevelopment plan was a response to two distinct demands. One was the social demand to clean up the afflicted site. The other was a real estate demand for commercial spaces. The 42DP program consisted of the renovation of five theaters and the erection of four office towers, one hotel, and a retail complex.²⁵

Like the Special Midtown Zoning District, the 42DP linked the public's interest in preserving the old theaters to the financial ambitions of its developers. The massive financial investment of the 42DP—which was the largest national redevelopment urban project yet undertaken in the United States—raises the following questions: Was the theaters' preservation a fig leaf for financial ambition? Did real estate redevelopers use the cleanup plan cynically, or had the long experience of crime and sleaze produced such a degree of panic to initiate urban development on a gigantic scale? At issue in either case are the ideological assumptions that bind financial and moral concerns.

The 42DP significantly altered the character of Times Square's built environment. This may not have been the case had the plan's original Design Guidelines, developed by urban designers Alexander Cooper and Stanton Eckstut in 1982, been followed. Stanton and Eckstut identified three objectives: to maintain and reinforce West 42nd Street's role as a public space, to preserve the spatial character of West 42nd Street as a low-rise corridor and to produce three differentiated areas—high-density office and retail space, a low-density entertainment cluster of theaters and an urban corridor. To reconcile a wish to preserve the site's character with the gigantic scale of the proposal, Cooper and Eckstut established detailed building specifications—specifications dealing mainly with setbacks, street wall requirements, and signage.²⁷

While the attention to materials and signage signaled the tendency to prioritize appearance over experience, the setback requirements put the pedestrian experience back on the table. Though the plan proposed a gigantic shift in scale, the stepped setback—which sustained the low street wall—bridged the gap between the high-rise skyscrapers and the collective memory of the street's practitioners
(pedestrians, hustlers, prostitutes, prowlers), all of whom inscribed their motion onto the street's facade.

Architects Philip Johnson and John Burgee, hired to build four office towers in Times Square, at first ignored the Design Requirements entirely. Their initial design (1983) provoked a public critique on aesthetic grounds. A revised version incorporated many of the Design Guidelines' suggestions but still lacked the required setback.28

The reason for the omission of the setback was, in a word, marketability. Setbacks not only reduce square footage, but also decrease the opportunity to sell contiguous floor space to prestigious firms.29 Eliminating the setback thus served the building's image (reputation). At this point, image as reputation was translated into a literal image (as in "image plane"). Without setbacks, the distance between volumes and planes collapsed and a new typology that embodies a conflation of reputation and representation emerged.

The collapse between reputation and representation, which followed the elimination of the setback requirement from the redevelopment plan, indicated the phenomenological transformation from spatial to visual typology. This transformation had already begun by the end of the 1920s with the conversion of theaters into movie houses. The transformation of volumes into surfaces in the new building typology signified the exteriorization of the shift from stage to screen—the transformation of a theatrical into a cinematic public space.

**TIMES SQUARE'S STREET SECTION IN RELATION TO THE GHOSTED SCREEN**

The redevelopment plan created a new kind of public space in Times Square with a new kind of street section—a section that is narrow, flat and, most importantly, is based on a building facade that resembles a movie screen.

This facade acts as a "ghosted silver screen," not just because it resembles a movie screen visually, but since it marks yet another formal transformation of what can be described as the "urban psyche" of the site. Intrinsic to the site's psyche is the original programmatic adjacency between the legitimate theater and illegitimate prostitution activity. This adjacency created not only the psychological split between the fantasized and the realized, but also the political split between the site's actuality and reputation. While the former was inherent in the urban programs present on the site at its inception, the latter was constructed by the collective narrative.

The media that have inhabited the site since its origin played a major role in the formation of both splits: they served as an agent of the fantasized and they were also instrumental in the construction of the site's image. The redevelopment plan, which aimed to rehabilitate the site's political image, ultimately linked its mythological construction to the formal construction of its public space.

While the mythological image of the site was inscribed in collective memory in relation to theater, the new formal language is borrowed from film. The theater remained central to the political image even after film overtook theater as the dominant media. It was only with the implementation of the filmic screen in the new building typology that the formal language of the site began to reveal a social and political shift in collective perception. This new perception represents the coalescence of the historical visual and political images of Times Square.

As a site of collision between the virtual and the real, the filmic screen planted the seed for the conflation of the two types of images and for the materialization of the immaterial imaginary in the form of a building. If the role of theater in the construction of Times Square's political image was to
counteract the reality of illegitimate prostitution activity, the filmic screen merely reflects it. In this sense, the theater is a mask and its attendant political image is symbolic, while the film is a mirror and its construction of the political image is imaginary.

The redevelopment plan as an agent—or reflection—of the collective mind as constructed by the media of film effected a public space that is based on the imaginary. It is flat, erases difference—prostitution was eliminated from the public sphere—and rather than producing, it reproduces images.

Epilogue

The current public space in Times Square comprises two vertical layers. Up until approximately their fifth floor (the height that used to mark the traditional setback), all of the buildings are covered in illuminated billboards. In this first layer, the screen becomes the wall. From the sixth floor up, the new towers implemented by the 42DP suggest an inversion: the wall has become a screen. Empty and flat, the upper walls may indicate a return—or phenomenological inscription—of the filmic screen in the form of a building typology. At the same time, their visual appearance alludes to yet another transformation. Made out of dark glass, which absorbs, filters, and rejects the flickering images of the layer below, the upper walls reveal that the screen has returned, but in its emptied version. Its imagery is distorted, fragmented, fractured, and refracted, and its surface absorbs, rather than omits, reflects, rather than projects, darkens, rather than illuminates. In the context of the site's psyche, should we read this formation as an attempt to distort and/or avoid fantasy itself, or simply as the expression of a desire to return to an earlier stage?

Figure 6. Phenomenological Evolution
References

1 This paper is a further development of The Skin in Times Square (2009), my research project at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. Advisors: Michael K. Hays and Peter G. Rowe. Editor: Anna Berggren Miller. This research was made possible by the generous support of the REAI (Real Estate Academic Initiative) at Harvard University between the years 2009-10.


3 The first theorist to discuss perception in relation to the social domain was Walter Benjamin. In his 1936 essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," he wrote: "The manner in which human perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well." Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968), 222.


6 Lynne B. Sagalyn, Times Square Roulette: Remaking the City Icon (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 37.

7 Ibid., 38-39.

8 Ibid., 40-42.

9 In 1936 Wrigley’s Gum erected the first large street sign. Built on top of former Olympia Theater Complex, this sign stretched over the entire block. http://www.nyc-architecture.com/MID/MID-TimesSquare.htm. An image of this sign showing its verticality and iconic appearance suggests an allusion to the Times Tower.


11 In her book, The Virtual Window, Anne Friedberg draws attention to the first use of the term “virtual” by the French philosopher Henri Bergson. He introduced the term in relation to visual studies in his 1889 book Time and Free Will. Bergson further developed the concept of the virtual in his 1896 book Matter and Memory, where he described the difference between the real and the virtual as “between being and being consciously perceived.” Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory, trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 37.

12 Terms borrowed from Henri Lefebvre’s book The Production of Space. Lefebvre used these terms (as part of a triangle which includes "the conceived") to distinguish between different modes of practicing urban life. Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, trans. Donald Nicholson Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

13 Friedberg discusses the significance of Giedion’s concept of space-time to the field of visual studies, and points out that he coined the term following German Mathematician Hermann Minkowski, who in 1908 examined the relationship between the two in the context of experimental physics. Friedberg, The Virtual Window, 118.

14 Although Giedion’s Space, Time and Architecture is considered one of the most influential texts with respect to the concept of space-time, he was not the first to discuss the intersection of space and time. In his Warped Space, Anthony Vidler draws attention to Abel Gance, writing in 1912. Gance imagined a new sixth art that synthesized the movement of space and time. Vidler also cites Elie Faure, writing in 1922, who first coined a term for the cinematic aesthetic that brought together the two dimensions: “cinelastics.” Anthony Vidler, Warped Space: Art, Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture (MIT Press: 2000), 102.
Giedion's context was Cubism's break from the Renaissance perspective.

Friedberg, *The Virtual Window*, 184.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid., x.

Sagalyn, *Times Square Roulette*, y.

Ibid., 171.


Ibid., 190-1.

Ibid., 192.

As developer George Klein explained: "Following the setback requirements would shrink the footplates at higher levels, thereby intensifying the difficulty of leasing to the banks, law firms, and advertising agencies the developer had targeted as tenants. These were prime tenants who took five, ten or twenty floors at a time, whose name looked impressive to lenders as well as on a building's ground floor directory." Ibid., 196.
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IMAGES


F3. Author's Diagram.


F6. Author's Diagram.
DO WE HAVE TO STICK TO THE SCRIPT?...CITIES, SURVEYS AND DESCRIPTING

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INTRODUCTION

With increasing ubiquity and fidelity, our physical world is being recompiled in portable, transmissible ways not seen before. It’s been some time that we could accept cities as things-in-themselves, and we can partly ascribe this to a major factor that defines the organization, scale and character of those cities: the patterning of the land that lies beneath them. The following explores the changing nature of land description goals and technologies, how such changes influence conceptualizations of our urban and ex-urban environments, and possible trajectories to yield new developments for the future of cities.

Metes and Metrics

In its long, global history, the division of land has been used to delimit agrarian or political boundaries, establish sovereignty, promote tax collection and define portions of land as real property. The demarcation of boundaries on the surface of the earth is commonplace, yet often hidden. As a formless regulating system that propagates – and allows us to comprehend – the orders underlying most of the world we’ve created, land surveying’s logics and conventions are often unconsidered and certainly underreported.

Real (res, Latin for “thing”) property is defined specifically by its tangibility and immovability. Because it can’t be withdrawn like a portable object (as personal property can), understanding exactly how large, what shape, and in what orientation the real property exists is critical for its viability as a possession and a commodity. In the sixteenth-century manors of England coming to terms with the post-Enclosure laws, a surveyor was commonly engaged to oversee (sur + voir) the holdings of the estate. He would inspect and document the land and its boundaries, noting improvements, crops, livestock, etc., and preside over the “court of survey” where an inventory of the holdings would be reconciled and enumerated in the “court roll.”¹ What was produced was information, not form: these reports were not graphic or pictorial but were an accounting, where land quantity, ownership and productivity were translated into lists and tabulations. As surveys increasingly became matters of course, the parameters that acted to define boundaries of land had clear repercussions for subsequent orders that emerged, most legibly in instances of civic form.

Numerography

As the duties of the land surveyor were progressively defined, their techniques were too. One of the conventional requirements to establish actual boundaries was entry onto the land to directly measure. Using both linear metrics and angular bearings to define extents, the surveyor worked in two dimensions, ranging over the landscape to plot courses and locate monuments. Surveyors traditionally thus had a more “intimate” and immersive relationship with the land than cartographers or painters, embodying a distinction in conception between an “outsider” who has a distanced, pictorial, morphological (and ultimately controlling) relationship to what he sees, and an “insider” who doesn’t really see at all – he just does.² The surveyor is there to deal with the facts on the ground and not to
interpret. In fact, he can leave the field with nothing more than a series of notes and numbers, and avoid the visual spatialization of a drawing entirely: no characterization, no representation.

The history of Spanish and Mexican land grants in California illustrates the disconnect between physical, material conditions and “mathematical” narrations. In the early occupation of the territory, application was made for a concession of land often using a pictorial sketch (a diseño) of natural features and boundaries. When California was ceded to the United States, holders of grants were required to prove their claim’s validity, needing their parcels surveyed using metes-and-bounds techniques acceptable to American courts. The lack of verifiability and geometrical precision in the diseños fell victim to a very different paradigm for land description, where numerical, non-representational techniques ruled. This “arithmetization of geometry, essentially the digitization of shape”5 has inexorably led to a new reality.

Historically, surveyors’ lineal measurements were taken (and/or projected) with direct, continuous methods. From the Egyptians’ use of knotted ropes, through the 66-foot long Gunter’s chain (from about 1620) that became a standard due to its portability, durability and numeric flexibility,4 to twentieth-century developments like low-thermal-expansion Invar measuring tapes, refinements in precision still left the mechanical, physically unbroken principle of measurement intact.

A new paradigm emerged in 1948 when the first Electronic Distance Measuring (EDM) device was introduced, where calculating the number of full and partial wavelengths of a beam of light bounced off a target (not unlike radar) could determine distance.5 These and subsequent technologies employing non-visible portions of the electromagnetic spectrum all substitute pulses of energy, whose reflections are measured in time and converted to spatial units, for the direct techniques used previously.6 Physically traversing the land using “inactive” instruments is replaced by “sedentary” positioning using active technologies, introducing a degree of remote sensing7 that provides new opportunities for discovery but alters the previously intimate relationship surveyors had with the object of study. And the electronic method of data acquisition allows easy incorporation into the digital world, as has become standard.

The refinement of measuring technologies and techniques has ever-increasing fidelity and accuracy as goals, to be achieved through ever-increasing precision. As they attempt to correspond finer and finer measurements with the mutability of the things being measured, the impossibility to fully define singularities and rely instead on probabilities (especially when it comes to positioning) embodies a “statistical-mechanical” view of the world8 where generalities provide more truthful results. A kind of uncertainty principle, we should acknowledge the limits of trying to identify an ideal condition where error, tolerance, and probability are more reliable guides.

**Comprehensive Bounds**

In the *Geography*, his work on surveying and mapping the known world, Ptolemy was clear to define the metric aspect of geography as the province of the mathematician, concerned with showing the world as a “single and continuous entity.”9 In an attempt to correspond to the continuity of the referenced topography, the “seamlessness” of land surveying tries to address all possible locations: ideally, no part of the globe is unconsecrated by this system. Even the “aberrations” of urban property development that triggered Matta-Clark’s *Fake Estates* project were calculated, delineated and recorded: there is no longer any terra incognita, as it’s all accounted for.

This seamlessness of intent is paradoxically implemented through seaming: a skein of geo-metrical lines enveloping the globe. Delimitation with “match lines,” where all boundaries correspond to others, means there are no gaps or excesses in the object being surveyed. But by continuing to insist (by default) upon proximal adjacency and the smooth continuity of surfaces, are we masking other versions of the city? Acknowledging global and digital “non-physical interconnections” or studying
the contemporary liquidity of real estate are perhaps more potent if we don’t unintentionally prioritize the city’s surface-based physicality. Saskia Sassen’s call to reconceive borders as “borderlands” may be one way to subvert the limited connections the simple act of division suggests, as lines become thicker, less distinct and open to negotiation.10

Descriptive code

In her seminal book on Dutch artistic conceptions and representations, Svetlana Alpers noted that Ptolemy’s use of the Greek graphikōs to define the work of the geographer could variously refer to picture-making, writing, or a field of study. The accurate portrayal of the earth and its localities could be accomplished through both maps and texts, as each is a kind of description.11 That is what the Geography discloses: the possibility of encoding the physical, visual, tangible world in a series of words and numbers. Book Two is an extensive list of locations coupled with their longitudinal and latitudinal coordinates. Ptolemy’s intention was for the tabular information to be used by anyone to plot on a blank map graticule one’s own version of the ancient world.12 The desire for reproducibility by encoding the graphic (a kind of proto-digitization) similarly led in Renaissance architecture to the rise of the construction drawing as a “notational mediator” through which one could script and communicate – using a pre-established code – form and intent.13

The function of a survey as a means of text-based description, not representation, is demonstrated in a common method of property documentation. In these instances, land records (“legal descriptions”) are textual and numerical narrations (“recitals”) that encode, in an un-graphic manner, the required references to real property. Sometimes even dimensions give way to the rest of the recital and become “more informational than factual.”14 Opting to use 1,000 words rather than a picture allows for greater precision, better transmissibility, and fewer claims than a solely pictorial approach: the abstraction of the symbolic code of language is both more durable and more portable than any representation.

In general, the techniques of land surveying all point in this direction: to create as accurate and comprehensive a version of the underlying territory as possible. As an inventory or organizational tool, empirical data is formulated to provide a verifiable, predictable and reliable option to the “real world” physicality it seeks to order. This push for quantifiability through pinpoint description set the base for future information-based versions of the city.

Tables to Models

Historically most surveys we encounter – plane surveys – have been conducted as intentional flattenings of the earth. While acknowledging its quasi-spherical geometry, the earth was typically conceived as a two-dimensional surface upon which things happen, as planar coordinate systems such as latitude and longitude attest. As scientific and political needs advanced, requiring larger scales and increased accuracy, surveying techniques that took the whole of the earth into consideration were developed. With geodesic models, a new means of assigning coordinates to any point on earth arose. Using the Cartesian system (with X and Y axes defining an equatorial plane and Z that of a reference meridian), an origin was created at the “center” of the earth. With the advent of non-terrestrial positioning techniques (like GPS), implementing a singular datum for specifying locations was now both conceptually and technically possible. Here, vectors from a single, stipulated center could be projected outward to define any point in space – whether on, below, or above the surface of the earth.15

With land description becoming truly “globalized” (even the term “surveying” is retiring in favor of “geomatics” and “geospatial engineering”)16 we have moved our conception of territorial occupations from two dimensions to three: no longer confined to a surface on which to dispose objects – which has led to a tendency to perpendicularly extrude imprinted patterns as a means to understand the earth, a position maintained in the “layering” approach of many GIS formats – we are now part of a potentially universal, infinite spatial model. We are no longer on the earth, but in it.
And this yields potential new directions in the kinds of digital models created to organize the full “thickness” of the information collected. Rather than be concerned with flattenings, projections, and the fidelity of shape translations (an obsession from Ptolomy to Buckminster Fuller) we now stockpile multi- and non-dimensional information and visualize it with specific situational intent. Likewise, we have moved from three-dimensional “appearance” models based on the geometry and materialization of surfaces to “solid models” where pixels become voxels and interiors matter as much as what’s on the outside.

Formless information

Given the softening of previous limitations on the collection of data, information continues to be digitized and correlated through various protocols (thus becoming seamless) and deposited in a potentially bottomless reservoir. Depending on needs, desires or accidents, parts of that insubstantial resource can achieve form, as the portability of the information renders it capable of easily shifting guises. This intricacy explains the picturesque seductiveness of GIS, where the inherent formlessness, recombinability and manipulability can bend the data to produce varied arrangements and visualizations. But it may be that the increased ability to accurately record the complexity of the environment, with the conceptual goal of 100% fidelity, is asymptotic and distracting.

What we’ve been producing is a “digital analogue” of our environment, a refraction of the “massive infrastructural deposit” of the city. This kind of analogy is one not based on representation, meaning or memory as an alternative to the “real city” but which nonetheless acts as a “corrosive agent” that may be able to dissolve the ossifications of history. Setting aside the ontological primacy of the material city as experienced, the alternatives for how we conceive our relationship are already present as options: based on imagination, symbolic codes, or systems and ambience, for instance. In this way, the intensive description of the city to create invisible, analogous models is inherently social: not singular, individualized or representational, the information on which the models is based is open-source shareable, awaiting activation.

Describing the City

Description for the surveyor is conventionally a project of singularity, verifiability and reproducibility, a linear process that results in the same (or at least approximately so) result every time. There is room for variance – with most processes redundancy is built in for error correction – but the usefulness of the outcome is predicated on predictability. This constrains the results of the survey to settle into “mere” context. It’s not about separating signal from noise, as it all becomes the background for other events, like urban development patterns, to build upon.

To create the information used to describe the city, the surveyor is conventionally a collector: an instrument verifying and recording pre-existing conditions, empirically and neutrally. The technology of GPS is an apt metaphor in that in using it, one establishes points and relations in a wholly passive manner, and while I may not be a camera, I am a wavelength receiver. The net result of the fieldwork, now involving description, re-enters the world as a projective but prescriptive enterprise (to reinscribe territorial boundaries, for example). So what might be a possible “active” role for land description, in a way that leverages the advances in the field to construct fictive realities?

Rather than be limited to the singular framework of the script, contemporary interest in what is loosely confederated as “scripting” holds promise for alternative mediations of the city. Like surveying, scripting demands attention to detail in order to realize intention: in most instances its symbolic code – a text-based language used to translate conceived ideas into machine instructions – must be “precise and pedantic.” Scripting’s potential lies mainly in its ability to interpret complex, non-linear situations where predictability can be a hindrance. As a generative process we can import recorded
data sets, unleash the potential of computation to produce alternative results, and physicalize the consequences to produce new “real” cities that participate in a cycle of re-creation.

One approach would counter the dominance of the two-dimensional and monocular privileging of plan orientation in land description, a direction suggested by the “fullness” of the digital geospatial model. Conventionally, property lines extrude vertically from the described surface, rendering a continuous two-dimensional spatial arrangement even though projected in three. But what if there were more complex descriptions made possible by “misreading” information that allowed for alternative geometries, different kinds of surfaces, and mutability of control (though perhaps with a net conservation of assets)? Some of these directions have already been suggested by legal mechanisms like air rights and condominium associations, but can the three-dimensional, complex, resource-rich digital model of our cities produce adventuresome arrangements like topological property lines or places of “boundary relaxation?”

An even more potent goal in going “off-script” is to reassert intimacy by being “inside” and guided through the data. Acquiring a massive amount of observed information may yield an authentic large-scale compilation, but its obduracy can overwhelm interpretation. By processing the remotely-sensed and the immaterial in ways that, due to their idiosyncrasies, produce individual “ownership” of the information, one may counter senses of distance and lack of connection to the city. This is not a call to produce fixed or solidified places, but deep knowledge of an environment to which one may nevertheless lack direct relation.

Ultimately, shifting the role of the survey from an empirical catalog to a generative script will also shift its effects out of the shadows and into the realm of actions that actively and instrumentally define the character of our cities. Recognizing the complexity of the contemporary condition where there are countless versions of the city being articulated, there are of course political responsibilities that must be accounted for: relationships to power, history, entrenched interests, technology, etc. As an activity that finds stability not in a single referent but in the aggregate of process outcomes, it can better address the long narrative of land occupation than closed-off descriptions that collapse from their own inflexibility. As a means to provoke more robust and productive models for urban organization, the future survey may have more to say than simply reminding everyone what the rules are.

References
7 Denis E. Cosgrove and William L. Fox, Photography and Flight (London: Reaktion, 2010), 71. Evelyn Pruitt of the U.S. Office of Naval Research coined the term to apply to truly “remote” satellite-based reconnaissance techniques and not systems like aerial photography, although it is now used for any long-distance recording technique.
11 Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983), 135-136. *Graphikós* from *graphō* (write, draw, record) was commonly translated into Latin as *pictor* (maker of pictures) but usually also with reference to *descripśio*, rooted in scribo, to write.
12 Ptolemy, *Geography*, 81-83. Ptolemy’s locations include “the more noteworthy cities, rivers, bays, mountains, and other things that ought to be in a map.” These could be plotted either on a spherical globe or a two-dimensional surface, for which he gives extensive instructions about projection techniques to minimize distortion.
15 Jan Van Sickle, *GPS for Land Surveyors* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2001), 126. The U.S. Department of Defense desired a passive and global orienting system such that locations in the field would not be disclosed by a transmitted signal and coordinates around the world could be uniformly referenced. Work on NAVSTAR GPS (Navigation System with Timing and Ranging, Global Positioning System) began in 1973 with the first implementing satellite launch in 1978. A “constellation” of satellites in six orbital planes ensures “visibility” and ranging by the required minimum of four transmitters at any time. The positions of the constantly-moving satellites must also be known at the precise instant the range signals are received, so time coordinates are as critical to this system as spatial ones. While averaging multiple readings produces ever-greater accuracies in positioning, the quest for a single definitive answer is counterproductive (Van Sickle, 68-76).

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Bibliography


INTRODUCTION

An essential initial observation regarding the topic of the call is that there seems to be a general questioning of all stable meanings, categories or identities involved in the conference title. If the mediated city is an experience of persons and not some other entities, then the main elements involved are people, the city and media. None of these terms or concepts can be taken to mean something clearly defined anymore: Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of ‘desiring machines’ or ‘machinic assemblages’ dissolves the rigid boundaries of the self (Deleuze and Guattari 1987); Latour distributes agency in human and other actors alike (Latour 2007); Pickering locates a ‘dance of agency’ between human goals and material resistance (Pickering 1995); McLuhan understands media as extensions of a person’s body or mind (McLuhan 1964); Don Ihde uses the expression ‘embodiment relation’ to refer to the incorporation of a tool by the body-mind complex, (Ihde 1990); Hansen calls technogenesis the co-evolving of humanity with technology (Hansen 2006); the complexity of the relationship between a medium and the human body and mind using it is appreciated by Donna Haraway who regards media as materio-semiotic systems that partake both of signifying practices and physical instantiation (Haraway 1991).

A second preliminary observation may refer to a degree of redundancy in the use of the epithet ‘mediated’ next to the noun ‘city’ since almost all experiences, especially urban, are mediated to one degree or other and in some way or other. In fact the whole setup of the urban, the built environment together with the cultures and languages it hosts, can all be seen as a dense forest of mediums ranging from thick prophylactics such as walls, to medium strength elements such as a slight bent on a walking path, to thin or practically immaterial expressions such as a body gesture, words that travel from one person’s mouth to another person’s ear, or an unspoken rule or assumption of what is normally expected.

A third observation is that one’s relationship with the urban is of course potentially not influenced solely by one medium but by many in the form of conditions which together form the context which makes a relationship or involvement possible. The presence of more than one condition in any urban experience is quite important since it breaks the rather rigid setup which positions the subject on the one side, another entity on the other and a medium in the middle. It thus makes sense to see the setup as a complex set of relationships rather than a tripartite, one way system of cause and effect, flow or influence.

The presence of many elements, with at least one of them human, leads to a fourth realization: any change in any of the entities or conditions involved will cause a change on the whole configuration rendering any such setup dynamic rather than rigid or stable. Whether any of the entities involved can have a fixed identity or role in the context of such a setup is something to be discussed.
A fifth observation is that a medium, be it material, organic or human, may not only allow or convey information but it may also prohibit, protect, expose, reduce, amplify, purify, contaminate, distort or preserve.

A sixth quite basic observation, if extreme situations such as being held hostage or prisoner are ignored, is that most urban experiences do not render the subject passive but involve various degrees and types of control, agency, freedom or choice.

Based on the above first clarifications, what I intend to do in this paper is examine the meaning of the theme of the call, ‘the mediated city’, by analysing a number of urban experiences which involve specific persons rather than disembodied subjects.

All the three case studies that follow took or keep taking place in the Dasoudi in Lemesos, a seaside public park with a restaurant, a playground and a pedestrian path running through it. Therefore, in a sense, the overall context is the same yet different situations emerge depending on the specific elements or ingredients that come together in each case. As will be seen, some of the ingredients are features intentionally designed by the architect or planned by the commissioning board, but some others are introduced less formally and yet play an equally important role in the emergence of the observed situation.

**EXPERIENCE 1: INVOLUNTARY ‘NON-PRESENCE’**

Before going home, after a long day at work, I went to the restaurant at Dasoudi Park to have dinner. Being rather late the restaurant was empty, yet I sat on the table next to the pedestrian path running along the restaurant’s sea side, despite the fact that the only other table occupied was just behind mine. A man and a woman in their mid-forties were sitting there apparently on their first date. Of what I understood they were both divorced, looking for someone and thus anxious to persuade each other that they indeed had things in common. Unfortunately for me the need to find things to agree on ended up using me and the fact that I was having dinner alone. They both found this rather strange, something neither of them would do. I distinctly remember the man saying: “I could never go to dinner alone in Cyprus. A Cypriot has to be quite lonely if he cannot find at least one friend to join him for dinner. I could see myself doing that if I were a tourist in a foreign place that no one knew me though.” My initial feeling of awkwardness was turned into one of embarrassment when I made the mistake of answering my phone in Greek, at which time they realised I was not a tourist but a local who was indeed dining alone. Suddenly I was no more invisible.

So, the medium in this case was an assumption on the part of a group of subjects regarding the identity of another subject in close spatial proximity with them.

**EXPERIENCE 2: CLAIMING ‘PRESENCE’**

Disputes that arise between a lady who sits on one of the benches next to the path running through the Dasoudi Park with her dog on a leash next to her and other walkers who may or may not find this appropriate, demonstrate the inability of architecture, however minimal, to demand one exclusive use, even with the support of signs. (Hadjichristos 2010).
The people who disapprove of her bringing the dog there, point to the fact that, as the sign at the beginning of the path says, dogs are not allowed in the area. She responds by arguing that this is not right especially since this is the only wooded part in the city where dogs can be in a more natural environment.

The lady seems to enjoy this recurring situation as it allows her to point out that having lived abroad for many years she is not a typical Cypriot and finds the way Cypriots treat dogs appalling. By entering into these arguments with other users of the path she seems to be able to kill three birds with one stone: argue for the rights of dog-owners, enter into a conversation with people thus breaking up her loneliness, and letting others know that she is not a typical Cypriot since she has lived abroad.

The fact that the sign forbidding dogs is placed on the side of the path does allow for more than one interpretation: a) dogs are not allowed to enter the area, or, b) dogs are not allowed on the path but may be in the forested area through which the path passes. The fact that the other sign on the same post is forbidding the use of bicycles does not help the first interpretation offered above since bicycles could never be used in the forested area due to the fact that the ground is covered with sand. A dog owner could thus argue that no law is broken if he or she walks on the path while the dog is walking along but off the path, an arrangement frequently seen happening.

What is of interest here is the contrast between the apparent clarity of both the architectural element and the sign on the one hand, and the way the path ends up being used on the other. The strategies used by the designer to produce the path together with the sign seem unable to prevent the emergence of tactics which generate uses that deviate from the ones intended. As De Certeau points out, ‘space is a practiced place’ where ‘the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers’ (De Certeau 1984, 117).

EXPERIENCE 3: NOT SUCH A STRAIGHT PATH

The slightly bending path running through the Sadoudi Park and the few benches along it, with the small forest on the one side and the beach on the other host yet another activity which was surely not in the brief given to the designer by the municipality: it seems to be acting like a medium through which different kinds of encounters between strangers are made possible.

As in the previous cases, here too, the characteristics and syntax of the space plays an important role in allowing for such situations to occur. The 1.2 km long path is basically made up of about four practically straight long segments each at a slight angle from the segment before and the one after it. Perhaps the only reason behind such a strategy was to avoid cutting trees as much as possible.

Another element contributing to the creation of the above mentioned opportunity is the fact that, since the beach is only a few meters away, one can sit on the bench half naked, wearing only a swimming suit. The fact that there are not many benches near each other makes it natural rather than suspicious to share a bench with a stranger. It is never too crowded while the length of each segment allows for a person sitting on a bench located in the middle of the distance to be able to observe both ends and have enough time to react accordingly if someone is seen coming. Yet perhaps the most important
ingredient in the making of the phenomenon observed is the fact that the path is used by many groups of people both tourists and locals, young and old.

What all these elements combined allow is for someone such as a ‘happily married’ Cypriot man to proceed, through taking a very small step each time, towards having a quick intercourse with a tourist or a stranger on a weekday, in a place he may actually be coming with his family in the weekends. He is not the ‘kind of person’ who would take the big decision to go to a night club, straight or gay, depending on his already acknowledged or not yet, preferences, but even if he has come to terms with his desires whatever those may be, he may not afford the risk of being seen at a space which is clearly labelled and recognized by all for what it is. On the other hand, one could hardly find unethical the decision to go for a swim, take a break from sunbathing under the strong Cypriot sun and sit on a bench a few meters away. Being the only bench on sight, sharing it with a stranger can hardly seem suspicious. It is then only a few meters walk into the bushes for more privacy and a few meters back to the sea where all is literally cleansed and absolved with a swim. Normality is hence restored.

The rather unique characteristic of this setup is that it offers the chance to take decisions and steps incrementally. There is no strong threshold, physical, temporal or other to be crossed, allowing a person to voluntarily assume a role of reduced agency. Potentially related to this is Latour’s idea that ‘action’ should not be understood as a fully conscious ‘act’ but as a node, a knot or a conglomerate of many unexpected sets of agencies that have to slowly be disentangled (Latour 2007).

**CONCLUSION**

This paper begun by acknowledging a general questioning of the meaning of the terms found in the call for the conference. Where does the material presented since leave us regarding architecture or the urban, the nature of media, or the formation of contemporary subjectivity?

Katherine Hayles and Todd Gannon find that ‘architecture in the present and near-future…incorporates the individual…as a node in a global network of interconnectivity that promiscuously mingles human with non-human agency, local embodiments with global communication flows, virtual overlays with actual buildings and media.( Hayles and Gannon 2013, 495). They propose that ’architecture…is not building, nor is it some privileged subset of building. Rather they ’posit architecture as an emergent property of a range of media, buildings among them (Hayles and Gannon 2013, 484).

Potentially related to these observations is Urry’s notion of the ‘collage effect’ which refers to the juxtaposition of stories as more important than the location of such an event.(Urry, 2000)

Juxtapositions, collages, entanglements, all point to a complexity which can no longer be understood using the system model. Referring to the new world of interfaces offered by the computer, Antoine Picon writes:

> Nothing was more admirable than the systemic arrangement of elements that characterized a Gothic cathedral or a bicycle. Computers and more generally electronic equipment are no longer designed according to these principles. They present themselves as layered assemblages of hardware and software
somewhat comparable to sandwiches. Even more than the inner organization of the layers, it is often their interfacing that matters today, and this interfacing is more akin to problems of code writing and translation than to structural design (Picon 2013, 502)

What everyday experience shows is that not only interfaces made possible by the new computer technology but even the simplest of setups involve the complexity of ‘layered assemblages’ where ‘code writing and translation’ are indeed crucial in the way unique possibilities are created. The specifics of the actualization of such virtualities or potentialities may even depend on fuzzy code writing and bad translations. One of the points this paper makes is that an assumption of normality, especially if it is false, could be seen as an important ingredient in the making of the ‘medium’ through which different rather unexpected kinds of interaction between the user and the urban environment are rendered possible.

A common element in all three case studies is the path which runs through the park. In each of the stories a different aspect of this quite simple architectural feature is called out to play a role which does not necessarily coincide with that intended by the designer. Such a shift in roles cannot be performed in isolation but always in relation to the roles of the other elements involved. This does not hold only for elements of the built or natural environment but for humans as well. Rather than being seen as observers or the recipients of an experience made possible by a material medium, humans lose their privileged position and become layered ingredients in the making of the medium.

Initially a concept which occurred through my critical approach on the way I painted, ‘layering’ has even given me options in the way I compose a scientific article: rather than have a text divided in a few sections, I create many more seemingly ‘independent’ texts which assume a different meaning, depending on the sequence in which they are arranged or read. These can travel not only within a paper but between papers as well. Such is the Layer presented below which talks about some initial observations regarding layering itself:

L116: What if layers can…

The examination of different works from a variety of fields allows for a still far from comprehensive outline of the characteristics of Layering:

- layers are separated by an in-between space which allows for their co-presence;
- each layer may be a pattern, or a composition made up of discrete entities;
- each layer potentially extends indefinitely in its plane;
- the sequence between layers is not fixed. The observer/creator of the setup can bring forth one layer and make others recede;
- no one layer is privileged in any absolute fashion by the setup. The observer/creator may use any hierarchical ordering system he/she desires at any specific moment;
- layers can be opaque, translucent or transparent, or they may be rendered so as desired;
- the observer is not situated outside the setup but is immersed in it and is part of it. It could be said that the observer is part of the in-between space which partly defines spatially the foremost layer;
- time is part of the setup, not in any linear sense but in the sense that change is inherent in the setup. Travelling from one layer to another, or shifting positions while staying within the boundaries of the same layer cannot take place while fixed at the same point on the dimension of time;
- elements from one layer can “contaminate” the other;
- new layers can be created at will;
- layering can be a physical arrangement available to vision, but is predominantly a conceptual frame of mind, an attitude. This explains why a literally two-dimensional entity may be perceived as layered while a clearly layered three-dimensional entity may be perceived as not-layered. The key player in both scenarios is the perceiving/creating subject.


In light of the material presented here, a medium, rather than a go-between transmitter, technological or other, can be seen as involving ‘topographies’ or ‘landscapes’ or simply threads from different layers which intersect in different ways with each other (at points, lines, or areas) creating the possibility of different emergences each time.

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THE MEDIATING CITY: A NEW INFRASTRUCTURAL ECOLGY.

Gregory J Haley
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INTRODUCTION

“Shared infrastructures shape our lives, our relationships with each other, the opportunities we enjoy, and the environment we share. Infrastructure commons are ubiquitous and essential to our social and economic systems.” - Brett Frischmann

“To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time.” - Hannah Arendt

“Technology has the knack of so arranging the world that we don’t have to experience it” - Max Frisch

“The use of any kind of medium or extension of man alters the patterns of interdependence among people, as it alters the ratios among our sense” - Marshall McLuhan

Infrastructure and Civilization: the Long Mediation

Since the beginning of city development, infrastructure in its various forms has been the mediating technology par excellence, allowing for collective urban life by mediating the vicissitudes of nature. Cities and infrastructure have always been, as posited by Michael Neuman and Sheri Smith in their study of city planning and infrastructure, “mutually interdependent and co-evolutionary” to the degree that “cities could not exist without infrastructure.”² In addition to mediating between humans and the natural environment, infrastructure has also historically played a civic and political function in mediating between people: as a civic armature or public works that gathers and bounds a community around a commons, defined by the elements that facilitate their living together. However, while infrastructure facilitates relations and interchange between humans and between humans and their environment, it has also been often an instrument of separation and disconnection, severing relations rather than bringing together. It is this dual potential for gathering and fragmentation that is critical to understand in defining the future role of infrastructure in our cities.

In early bounded city settlements, city walls acting as a primary infrastructure of containment and defense, clearly defined a distinct boundary between human settlement and nature inscribe in the very form of the settlement itself as well as distinction between people within and without. The form and infrastructure of the city were to a degree one and the same and together defined literal and figurative political boundaries. The siting and extent of such settlements were to a large degree predicated on the characteristic of its environment: its geography, connections to and access from other places (rivers, harbors, cross roads, etc.), and the availability of resources such as food and clean water.

These early settlements, such as the Greek city-states were in McLuhan words “a tribal form of an inclusive integral community, quite unlike the specialist cities that grew up as extensions of the Roman military expansion...”² With the onset of the modern industrial city however,
Infrastructure as a strategic means of directing urban development came to the fore. Urban form and the particularities of place were traded for an abstract process of urbanization overlaid universally and to a large degree, regardless of setting. As a result many of the interdependencies of human and natural ecologies were obscured and replaced with a mechanical ideology predicated on limitless growth brought about by a technological subjugation of nature. This mode of infrastructural urbanization, brought about through the development of first long distance canal and rail networks, followed by extensive public services including waterworks and sanitation systems facilitated the extension of human settlement beyond the capacity of the natural environment.

While maintaining an illusion of stasis and mastery over nature, the specialization and partitioning of urban engineering functions that characterized this approach to city planning, continued to expand and differentiate through the balance of the 19th and 20th century, in particular with the onset first, of streetcar suburbs followed by the ascendancy of the automobile and the decentralization of urban patterns that it engendered. The resultant urban experience was characterized by a fragmentation, where, as McLuhan – following Mumford, describes, older center-margin structures were exploded and the centers replicated everywhere without margins.  

Through this process infrastructure become the dominant form of city organization to the point where as McLuhan argues the highway itself became “a city stretching continuously across the continent, dissolving all earlier cities into the sprawling aggregates that desolate their populations today.” Parallel to this decentralization was a slow bureaucratization of city planning that focused on policy and zoning as a primary means of defining our cities, and the markedly diminishing influence of designers and planner on the form and structure of the physical city.

Civil Society, Nature, and Co-Existence

Cities and their infrastructural networks have often been used to express and extend power. The historical dependency of empire on lines of communication and transportation for example is clearly evident in the adage that “all roads lead to Rome”. However, the trajectory of infrastructural development, as sketchily outlined above, also has an implication for our understanding of the civic value of infrastructure and the role that it has to play in human politics. Infrastructure as a backbone of resource distribution and definer of “commons” holds political implications, both for conceptions of a civil society, and for any sense of democracy and distributive justice amongst both living and future generations.

Cities and infrastructure by extension have always had an important place in discussions of what constitutes the “Good life”. In his study of water infrastructure in turn of the century Chicago, Boston and Philadelphia, Carl Smith proposes that the city is “as much an infrastructure of ideas, as it is a gathering of people, a layout of streets, and arrangement of buildings, or a collection of political, economic, and social institutions. The infrastructure of ideas neither precedes nor follows the building of a physical and social infrastructure, but is inseparable from them.” and that civic infrastructure he claims can “express the beliefs, values, and aspirations of the city that created it.”

During the later 19th and early 20th century, attempts were made to integrate and humanize the new large-scale engineering works that had emerged from the industrial revolution, into the fabric of the city and so to mediate between the scale of city-wide and regional infrastructure and that of the individual citizen. In practice it often resulted in a sort grafting of architecture onto large scale infrastructural engineering as in Otto Wagner’s integration of the U bahn into the cityscape of Vienna, or as in the case of the Philadelphia waterworks where classical monuments announced the presence and importance of the civic infrastructure it enclosed. In other cases however, combinations of private development, service functions, and public amenities, were superimposed as a result of real estate pressure such as the decki
over of the loop and the development of the Chicago River promenade. With the general dispersal of population from cities In the latter half of the twentieth century and the more recent neo-liberal turn, the momentum of civic oriented infrastructure has slowed considerably and the majority of projects during these decades have been treated either solely as mono-functional engineering works such as multi-lane highways or as civil engineering services that are buried and kept out of sight and mind.

Crisis and Transition: Over Extension, and Reintegration

As we enter the 21st century the illusion of our technological mastery over nature and the feasibility of unlimited growth, is breaking down in the face of climate change, deteriorating infrastructure and disinvestment in developed countries such as the United States, and the rapid urbanization of developing countries which far outpaces the provision of adequate infrastructure to serve and direct its growth. The over extension of our modern development and consumption patterns have begun to place the ecological infrastructure of our planet in great peril.

Simultaneously, Utility providers faced with emerging pressures from the liberalization of service utility markets, tightening environmental standards, the high cost of modernization, and the uncertainty of future consumption patterns have in the last decades begun to change the way infrastructure is planned, implemented, and maintained, in an comprehensive effort to rethink the way in which “technical networks shape material and energy flows in an urban region”. The old model “public service ethos” of supply management driven solely by economic considerations and technical limitations are being replaced by a combination of supply and demand strategies that allow for social or spatial differentiation. Given this rethinking of utility infrastructure, the design and public interface of power stations, water works, sewage treatment plants, and other “key transformation and distribution nodes” within these larger material and energy flow networks is a key opportunity for designers to add social value and resilience to our urban systems, by reintegrating the physicality of these node points into the experience of the city.

Ecology and Politics

The future challenges of infrastructure are as much questions of collective values and ecological co-existence as they are of efficiencies and sustainability. In a world of finite resources and an ever increasing pressures, our future as a species will depend on how we distribute our resources, and how In the process we reimagine our place in this world and reconfigure both our concept of urban growth, the organization of our society, and our relation to and within nature vis a vi environmental resource flows.

To Ranciere Aesthetics acts defined as “configurations of experience” have the ability to “create new modes of sense perception” and induce “novel forms of political subjectivity”. If this is related to the function of infrastructure as an armature that mediates our existence, there must be potential for the design of infrastructure, both as a network, and as a series nodes points of human interactions within this network, to “configure” our individual and collective urban experience in such a way as to raise an awareness of the larger ecologies within which we exist, and through this situating of our collective consciousness to open up opportunities for the development of new modes of thinking and living, and new “subjectivities’ that have the potential to alter our worldview. In other words the media of infrastructure through its ubiquity and pervasive influence on the configuration of our way of life is of critical importance, if we agree that a movement in our global collective values and way of existence is required.
Through his discussion of the relation of art and ecology in the 1960’s and 70’s, James Nisbit points out that while ecological relationships cannot usually be observed directly due to the time scale at which they operate,” one can see its influence within works of art”, and that “such artworks provide an empirical interface for grasping both ecological processes and ways of thinking about them.” The challenge and opportunity for design then is to seek out engaging points of interaction between ecology and culture, and to present evidence of these processes and relations as experienced in time and space.

In arguing that our mechanical technologies have put us out of touch with ourselves, McLuhan postulates that “Perhaps touch is not just skin contact with things, but the very life of things in the mind?” Thus perhaps is it through a tactile engagement with our environment as framed by design that new modes of thinking and existing might be made available.

Conclusion: Toward a New Infrastructure of Civic Ecology

Our contemporary world view is characterized more and more by complexity, dynamism, fluidity, and interdependence rather than the assumptions of regularity and predictability upon which the infrastructure of the last century was built. Are there now opportunities for a new infrastructure which is more flexible, adaptive and interactive, and which has the ability to make more apparent and legible our ties to each other and to nature? Could a new conception of infrastructure encourage a sense of interconnectedness within the larger ecologies within which we exist, and begin to breakdown human/natural dichotomies? Do possible synergies of infrastructure and ecology present conceptual opportunities for infrastructure reconceived as public space, to become a mediating armature for the emergence of a new civic image-ability at the scale of the metropolis and of the region?

Given the dynamics of urbanization today, the answer to these propositions is I believe, yes, but a qualified yes dependent upon the agency of designers, planners, and engineers to define a new and progressive ecology of urban infrastructure that is legible and supportive of urban form; inclusive and civic; regional in perspective; resilient and above all, broadly ecological in the way that it structures our “coexistence”, and as Timothy Morton defines the scope of ecology, “all the ways we imagine how we live together.” (Morton, 2010, p. 8)

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PLANT IDENTIFICATION AND MAPPING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the variety of recent digital media available for the identification and mapping of plants in cities in relation to the history of plant guides and maps. It raises the question: how has our focus on plants—especially their identification and mapping—evolved over the centuries and how might new digital media extend and/or limit our relationships with plants? The paper begins with an historical perspective on the processes of identifying and mapping plants and describes the development of plant books and their changing purposes within the general development of Western culture through a scientific lens. It touches on Theophrastus' *Enquiry into Plants*, Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica*, Linnaeus’ *Systema Naturae*, and Tansley’s work in ecology. Next, the paper discusses the recent proliferation of locative media for identifying and mapping plants, which use face recognition software, crowd-sourcing, and location-based-services through GIS. These include *Leafsnap* for plant identification and *i-Tree* for ecological investigations of vegetation in cities. The paper concludes that in every era, human interests in plants and the media we’ve devised to investigate plants have been knit together. The 21st century is no different and the new digital media will be of great use in addressing issues as complex as climate change and as basic as identifying fresh fruit in cities. Overall, the new media have the potential to deliver knowledge to people about plants that was formerly hard to get, which may lead to an increase in plant literacy, especially in cities.

INTRODUCTION

The lives of humans and plants are woven together tightly. New digital media, discoveries in plant science, and changes to the social and physical contexts of our lives may alter the particulars of our relationships with plants, but our connections to them remain and may strengthen through such media in the 21st century. From a biological and evolutionary perspective we share many of the same genes with plants1. Culturally, most of our crops are products of artificial selection. Opportunistically, some plants we call weeds have adapted to thrive in the conditions we prepare for other plants and purposes. For most of our history, our focus on plants has centered on survival, and it still does, even if the burning questions have shifted from which plants are poisonous to how much carbon a typical tree sequesters to offset climate change. No matter when and where we find ourselves on the planet, searching for, identifying, and sharing plants are basic human activities. Most of us find ourselves wondering at some point, which plant this is? What are its names? Where did it come from? How did it get to be where it is? What properties does it have? There is often some practical reason for this typical line of questioning, but it may also be out of sheer curiosity.

How we answer these and other questions about plants has a lot to do with our time and place and the particular media available to us to investigate. And so, while this paper is about new digital media designed to investigate the identity and locations of plants, it presents these in relation to the history of Western plant knowledge up until now. The focus of the history is on Europe and North America, and the perspective is largely scientific. The discussion of the new digital media that follows, while rooted in various ways to the history of Western culture, isn’t presented here as a logical next step in its development. If anything, the new media seem to make information about plants that was once
difficult to access, widely available across cultures and continents, while using similar conceptual devices to organize it.

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Identifying and mapping plants is not a new activity. In the Western tradition, Theophrastus (371-287 BC), a student of Aristotle, identified about 500 distinctive plants and categorized them by their observable characteristics and properties² and also noted where they grew. This compilation of plant knowledge, his Enquiry into Plants, is the oldest book of this type to survive in the Western tradition. Others in antiquity, assembled texts devoted to plants, but Dioscorides’s work is perhaps the most remarkable³. A physician in the Roman army, he traveled widely and recorded all of the plants he encountered, their properties and lore. His book, De Materia Medica, became the primary plant text in the literate world for about 1500 years, copied and re-copied over centuries. Texts like Enquiry into Plants and De Materia Medica represent the plant knowledge of the literate world before the Renaissance. But this was not the only way that people knew plants. The plane tree (Platanus orientalis), for instance, is a common entry in these historical texts, but would also have been commonly known through oral tradition and use.

The Western world of plants expanded greatly during the European Renaissance. This was in part through the re-reading of texts like that of Theophrastus, but also through exploration, particularly to the Americas. The number and variety of plants available grew ten-fold, as did the number of volumes it took to complete an herbal. Trees like the American sycamore (Platanus occidentalis), a New World cousin of the plane-tree, crossed the Atlantic and became key features of new botanical gardens and herbaria (dried specimen collections), often associated with universities, such as the first one in Padua, Italy (1545)⁴. Plants in these gardens were organized by types, using the notion of the Great Chain of Being or scala naturae, which combined Aristotle’s way of ordering substances (including life forms) with the Christian notion of the fixed nature of species as created by God⁵.

This perspective that plant species are fixed entities carried all the way through the Enlightenment and into the late 19th century. Carolus Linneaus, the great systematician who invented binomial nomenclature, structured his work or flora (the term to replace herbal) around Orders, which still related to the scala naturae in his Systema Naturae of 1735. Even as Linneaus worked to fit the known species into his system, the plane-tree and the American sycamore naturally hybridized where they were planted side by side at the Oxford Botanic Garden, producing the now famous urban street tree, the London plane. Hybridization and artificial selection were the starting points for Darwin’s evolutionary theory in On the Origins of Species (1859). But despite the long history of crossing and breeding plants, which Darwin argued attested to their mutability, those concerned with plant identification, Bentham and Hooker in Genera plantarum (1862-1883) still based their classification scheme on plant morphology rather than evolutionary relationships. Only late in his career did Bentham concede that plant species were the products of the ongoing process of evolution⁶. However, despite Bentham and Hooker’s resistance the evolutionary concept, their taxonomy is still useful today for the key structure it developed. And though we may understand the evolutionary relationships between plant species more now and have the ability to map their genes, plant identification is still most feasible with keys that focus on plant morphology, the plant’s phenotype rather than its genotype.

At the same time as the great botanical developments of the 19th century in the realm of evolutionary biology and taxonomy, another great wave of plant exploration occurred. This was the age of the biogeographers such as Alexander Von Humboldt, who explored the high peaks of the Andes, for example, and found relationships there between where plant species grow and the climates they experience. Subsequent studies in the relationships between plants and their environments brought about the field of ecological science, especially, in the work of Arthur Tansley, whose projects included mapping the vegetation of the British Isles and later the introduction of the ecosystem concept in a 1935 publication, “The use and abuse of vegetational terms and concepts”. And now,
though much of the heterogeneous surface of the earth has been mapped and only a handful of novel plant species are discovered each year, experts and novices often still face the seemingly simple questions posed earlier, what is this plant and where does it grow?

The issues of identifying and locating plants are equally pressing for an ecologist in the field, a farmer behind the plow, or, in the author’s case, a landscape architecture educator concerned with planting in cities. And because of the great exchanges that have occurred with plants between continents and among people, historical bio-geographical limits have been blurred, particularly in cities. This has as much to do with the cultures of the people who have migrated with their plants as any particular plant’s tendency to disperse, germinate, and grow in the novel conditions we create in urban environments. Knowing plants in this 21st century context, in which a plant one encounters might be one of 130,000 globally (not to mention cultivars), rather than say 1,300 locally (in a typical temperate region) suggests that the map and matrix of species has shifted and the media through which we know and locate them must change too.

IDENTIFICATION

Not until the late 20th century was the body of knowledge described above easily accessible. Up until about 20 years ago, the primary means of identifying a plant would have been to find a hard copy field guide or to ask an expert. Field guides became especially popular in the 20th century in the United States. Examples range from Wherry’s Wildflower Guide first published in 1948 to Fernald and Kinsey’s 1943 book, Edible Wild Plants. Increasingly, guides like the Peterson field guide series, which began with some color illustrations, now include color photographs and key maps for the range or distribution of plants. Printed in the millions of copies, there seems to be no shortage of guides available to identify plants today, all the descendants of the generations of plant books, herbals and flora that have preceded them. Most guides lead the reader through a dichotomous key that helps narrow in on the identity of the plant in question through a decision tree with leads based on the plant’s characteristics. The leads are usually quite straightforward features of plants. For instance, in Wherry’s guide he uses “floral structure, significant features of leaves, stems, roots, et cetera” to organize the key. Of course, in parallel, and supporting the richness of botanical inquiry at the level of the novice field guide, has been the work of scientific botanists, (such as Gleason and Cronquist at the New York Botanical Garden) who developed an exhaustive key in technical language that covers the flora of Northeastern North America, drawing out the hairline distinctions between species.

So what’s happened with identifying plants recently? A great deal of field-guide type information has been transferred onto the web, especially through the work of botanical gardens. The NYBG, for example, has scanned several million specimens in its herbarium. Searching for plants has become even faster with computer aided multi-access keys, which can sort through multiple plant characteristics simultaneously to find an identity. Interestingly, this type of key search now common on the Internet had its origins in the great taxonomic keys of the 18th and 19th centuries. Now, not only can a knowledgeable person conduct a key search on the Internet, a relative novice can use the equivalent of face-recognition software for plant identification, as well as crowdsourcing to identify plants. In applications like Leafsnap, a joint effort of Columbia University, the University of Maryland, and the Smithsonian, anyone with a mobile device can take a photograph of a tree leaf, and have it identified from among several hundred possible tree species, as well as geo-locate it. Using an algorithm that analyzes the leaf morphology, the app performs the same function that our brains formerly did when we learned plants or the faces of our neighbors visually. Other apps, such as Plantifier, allow users to upload photographs of plants they are trying to identify and other users of the app are free to comment on and attempt to identify the plants (crowdsourcing). In both cases the digital media are making available the identities of plants through new means, somewhat like the mental processing required to recognize plants after we have studied them, perhaps after having been told their identity by a teacher or elder. The apps may short circuit learning to identify plants through their morphology and eliminate some of the social processes that were once in place to learn about plants, but, as will be discussed, they may provide other social functions and open up the world of...
plants to individuals and cultures, which no longer retain close ties with their ecological community, including plants.

**MAPPING**

Knowing where plants are located can be of great value. In terms of the fields associated with economic botany (agriculture, horticulture, forestry) the importance of mapping plants can have obvious consequences to the livelihoods of individuals, communities, and nations. Bio-geographers since the late 19th century have had economies in mind, but also have been genuinely curious about the distribution of plants and their interactions within ecosystems, as were Tansley’s and his colleagues in the first half of the 20th century\(^{14}\). Today the ecosystem approach seems almost second nature to many and increasingly informs environmental, economic, and social planning and decisions. Through most of the 20th century there was a rich tradition of making analog maps of vegetation, which is nicely described in its European form by Franco Pedrotti\(^ {15}\). Currently, the media of choice for mapping vegetation is Geographic Information Systems (GIS), which captures, stores, and manipulates all sorts of geographical data. GIS, when Roger Tomlinson developed the first version in 1968, was designed for forestry mapping in Canada\(^ {16}\). This digital media and the satellite systems it now uses, coupled with aerial photographs, have extended the possibilities for knowing the vegetation of the planet, and especially its distribution and health, as well as being useful in numerous other arenas. An example of its application is Digital Aerial Sketch Mapping\(^ {17}\). This process of the U.S. Forest Service is used to map the distribution of pest outbreaks with a combination of aerial surveys that are transformed into GIS data. Ground surveys act as quality control. On the ground is where most users of new digital media find themselves in the position of wanting to locate plants or map plants they have found and where using the location-based-services of GIS or basic web searches can help locate a great variety of specific information on plants very easily.

Recently I was curious about the northern extent of the pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) on the east coast of the United States. I found myself quickly reading notes on specific populations with addresses in New Jersey, providing an approximate range. This I could corroborate with Little’s *Atlas of United States Trees*\(^ {18}\) from 1977, which showed a spotty distribution in the areas described online. Increasingly, the question of the range of certain species will be raised as our climate shifts. The mapping that is possible with location-based-services on mobile devices and with every hit on apps (such as Leafsnap) has a great deal of potential for better understanding the populations and distributions of our flora.

Other applications, designed specifically to map vegetation, such as i-Tree\(^ {19}\), are popular with a wide range of users for mapping tree populations. Data-gathering, which formerly was limited to specialized scientists, is now in the hands of citizens from school children to retired persons, who are able to satisfy some of their interests and curiosity with plants and make a contribution to ecological science. Their work with this application goes beyond naming, sizing, and pinning trees to estimating their ecological contributions to urban environments. Through this type of application, cities can begin to answer questions about the role of trees in the health of urban areas and how climate change might affect the distribution of species. The possibility of pooling data that is collected with abundant handheld devices will likely be quite useful in the coming decades, as our cities grow and the expectations we have of their vegetation increase around the concepts of ecosystem services and the need for resilient plants. On the other hand, as advanced as the technology is, sometimes its beauty is that it allows us to come back to basics with projects like Fallen Fruit\(^ {20}\). This initiative began with online postings of analog maps of fruit trees in Los Angeles. It has turned into an online cooperative to steer pick-it-yourselfers to free, ripe crops.

**CONCLUSION**

So what are some of the possibilities for the new digital technology mentioned, some of which come out of botanical science, like the multi-access key, or forestry, as in GIS? There are the rather obvious ways that identifying and mapping plants through new media will prove useful to people on small and
large scales, which have given rise to the applications already discussed. Generally, they’re of use in ecological planning and design with the pressing issues of how to manage forests and agriculture across the globe. The new media will also be useful dealing with the difficulty of invasive plant species, which disrupt functioning ecological systems, leading to losses in biodiversity. And there are economic questions to which these tools can be applies, such as how we can bring ecosystem services into the marketplace and make ourselves responsible citizens by marrying our wallets to the health of our forests and waterways. In addition to these clearly important causes, it seems that one of the wonderful effects of tools like the crowd-sourced Plantifier or i-Tree is how online communities can lead to live, in the flesh, interactions. The virtual media bring people together around a living medium central to humans: plants. A possible outcome here is that in cities, where people are sometimes estranged from the vegetable world, may now engage in new dialogues between plants and people. Currently, urban people in Western culture encounter most plants as products, at the delivery end, severed from the plant that bore it, making it less obvious to ask the questions, which began this piece. But this situation doesn’t seem to be out of a lack of interest, as a visit to the US Botanic Garden or any other urban vegetated plot clearly suggests: they abound with people. There is a significant and diverse population of people with interests in a wide-range of plants in any urban area. Matching people with plants and finding the people-plant relationships that matter in our lives is not an easy task, but it’s being made easier with new media. Identifying, locating, and sharing plants through media that engage us immediately and virtually will connect us eventually through live experience and will help us plant and cultivate our cities. Having the herbarium-like Internet, available to all, as opposed to cloistered away, is wholly appropriate in the 21st century. As we pursue life in a global culture, the notion that we have particular local interests, greatly appeals to people. Digital media can facilitate the connections and transmission of knowledge around plants to foster such interests, working to redefine a contemporary idea of a plant community may be.

In conclusion, there seem to be three main benefits to the use of digital applications for plant identification, mapping of vegetation, and sharing of plant information. The first is that knowledge about plants is now freely accessible near and far from where plants of interest grow. Details on the characteristics and properties of plants and the stories associated with them are no longer bound to the institutions and people that hold rare volumes. Rather, the pages of old tomes can be flipped virtually, while standing next to living specimens of the plants described therein. Second, when designed to source information from users, plant apps can gather data that can aid in the modeling of ecosystems and the plant communities that are critical to them. This aspect of new media, that gives most data a geo-spatial character, is already having a profound influence on the interactions we have with each other and our environment. It is changing the global ecosystem, so that we can make more informed decisions, in this case, about how to plant and cultivate designed places in the 21st century. Of course, locative media have many more applications than this, but to point out one more in this vein, our ability now to use GIS and sensor technology to guide crop production is in many ways the kind of innovation that is leading to the growth of cities today. Third, the communities that can form through the sharing of information about plants online and the growing archive, which is essentially a record of the oral traditions of the way people interact with plants, are beginning to be built. Finally, it is interesting to think about ways that virtual interactions with plants may lead to live plant-people interactions and if virtual interactions can ultimately lead to increased community involvement with living plants, even as many of the larger global plant populations are managed remotely.
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Experimental Text – Contents

1a Paper: Heron-Mazy: An Architectural Cine Roman (8 pages <3000 words)
1b Portfolio: Bigtown Deadmall Strategies. Figures 1-8
Appendix: Portfolio Heron-Mazy Video Cartographies Assistant Ryan Manning Figures 1-10

1 STRANGE OVERTONES – MASTERS OF SYNTAX

This groove is out of fashion
These beats are 20 years old
David Byrne & Brian Eno

This paper presents the notion of a Deadmall as a programmatic and mediated urbanism. It sets up ‘pinball strategies’ to play the prejudices, preconceptions, privileged codes of architecture against the unknown economics of building, ruin, and the ultimate ceaseless enigma of Capital. City symphonies are often trite re-creations of our own privileged world. Architects become tourists to their own Biennales. The commercialized urban landscape is a provocation that has gone on for too long. Contrary to the privileges we accept, we are not perfectly attuned to photo-realistic imagery or the clichés of digitally laden experiences. We are only imperfectly attuned to moving imagery. Language itself is part of change and resistance to change; the status quo is fed by a rational inertia within the existing urban models. Media transforms media. Only! This is a partial world which creatively destabilizes everything we use to settle on. ‘The city’ is now out of site, disconnected as fast as it reconnects. Partial, incremental, operative: of course it is a simultaneous experience but how? Content is deflected to immediacy. The outdated is smart thinking. Financial, tectonic games, and digital blasphemies respond to, deflect and bounce off a lazy architectural past, as the economic and social resuscitation of the Deadmall takes place. Out of site becomes the site for all media and urban overlap. Architects are no longer masters of space-syntax, skateboarders are.

2 INTERFACE, ANIMALL AND BRAUTIGAN

Interface, Animall and Brautigan is a critical re-mix of a mediated project (Bigtown Mall, Mesquite, Texas; Heron-Mazy, 2003) exploring how partial architectures constantly overlap to become a reality. These mediated strategies suggest a critical re-situating of architecture to collaborate with institutions and agencies in order to re-shape their own activities and potential. Bigtown proposes a redevelopment in response to community, investment and contractual feasibility. Incremental architectural strategies with clear tectonic and structural means allow the ‘locality’ to regain an identity inviting new spatial and participatory encounters. Those still in business are encouraged to re-invent themselves, or re-occupy the mall within the new scheme. The structure of investment and incremental design means
that declining businesses are resuscitated, resurrected or then allowed to decline in order to be re-animating.

A Mediated Urbanism is as much about language, change and structure as it is about architectural and urban potential. The project as brief and anti-brief, sets up ‘pinball strategies’ to bring public space, the economics of building and investment into open play within the mall itself. These strategies use architecture to destroy its privileged codes and open up to new codes. Switching codes, indicated by the use of language, allows new collaboration with institutions and agencies in order to re-shape the potential for contemporary social needs.

The fluidity of the relationship between architecture, culture, investment and public space must provoke encounters. Communication and collaboration strengthen architecture’s reach. Scenarios and theory matter little if generosity and responsibility are not embedded in this project from the outset.

The youth, the skateboarder, the DJ and sampler, are as much part of the team as the economist. The architect, responsible for the steering parameters, must communicate – partially never totally - with all involved, translating the ideas drawn, projected and imagined into partial, incremental developments. Negotiation and encounters between a multi-disciplinary working group would begin to shape the scheme: an on-site zone – the whatever exhibition - would begin demonstrating the ideas.

3 AN ARCHITECTURAL CINÉ ROMAN

Interface, Animall and Brautigan is an architectural diagram-in-progress, an architectural ciné roman offering pinball strategies of resuscitation of the existing ‘deadmall’ in Mesquite, Texas. Operative strategies – from the reclamation of ‘deadspace’ to the revival of dying space – necessarily mean that the new development of Bigtown is always only a work in progress. This is crucial. This architecture combines with a mediated urbanism and is forever in flux, or incomplete, as in reality such malls are. The metaphors rebound.

Downtown is the underbelly, the existing ‘base’ within which the new activities and trans-programmed functions are proposed. The mall goer can enter the various activities of Downtown but can also access the AIRSPACE (superstructure) from within, through various vertical upzones (see difference between rupture and aperture) and from without, by external chutes of the sort we recognise from airport design. New resistant retailing concepts, low-maintenance cost strategies will constantly transform the mall-city into a new electronic interactive environmental shopping, social and public space concept. It achieves this by re-integrating the newer, latest waves of anti-merchandising incrementally and provocatively.

4 AND PINBALL IS PERTINENT

And Pinball is pertinent: information and know-how is re-directed and re-combined to form new genres of public space. A ‘personal’ as well as a ‘social’ resuscitation of the mall takes place. Partial architecture becomes reality or then allowed to die once more. These are not alibis for architectural form, these are not only dead metaphors for a new dying space; these are life-savers! A micro-world of future urbanism: 1 uptown leisure/entertainment (the airspace) 2 Downtown indoor park (the underbelly) 3 The scanograph 4 interface 5 Brautigan 6 Animall Invader 7 Alphabet centre 8 Safe House 9 The Cry of the Toad Centre for Minorities 10 The Mediathèque 11 The Meme Machine 12 the Whatever Exhibition space 13 The Vacant lot (sports zones) 14 Cine-Terrace 15 The Cutting Edge 16 Nod to Hank, Willie & bob 17 wopBopaLooBop 18 Micro-Station - craft ateliers 19 The
5 PUNCH STRATEGIES

1 The Tilt Factor - aperture/horizontal rupture/ vertical

After investment potential, on-site meetings and local action, an operative strategy can begin in stages. Funding is as incremental as the architecture and space revived. Initially, as in oil drilling, a series of tectonic incisions are made into the existing mall, the location of each determined by the possibilities they offer to the whole project. Picking up on the analogy of the pinball machine, apertures are provocatively inserted within the existing roof structures. Chutes consist of two shard structures penetrating downtown and uptown. These chutes and shards serve as the new constructional structure; a service and technological network. Extending upwards, creating a new airspace, grafted new roof structures are formed. These vary from steel-net vaulting, glass membranes shells and lantern roof pavilions and make up the roofscape of the new city-mall. Extending downwards, glazed and wired shards act as docking stations. Small domes balloon off the shards to take in nodal requirement. Drones are landed. New divisions, new functions re-light, re-service and re-claim the indoor park underbelly. These architectural manoeuvres – punch strategies - operate as an open gambit, the city as motherboard and gameboard develops. Urban hybridization and mediation within a new urban park, much talked about, can become a reality, both for the neighbourhood and the wider community.

2 The Scanographic - extending structures/slide rule/runway

Using advances in crane and aerospace technology, and in robotics, two (or more) long armed building cranes are used to begin the work, either placed as scanographic arms on either side of the complex or then operating from within the building as arcing machines (positions C1 & C2). These constructional cranes will remain throughout the development, eventually occupying their rightful pace within the new complex as connecting machines for the Organimall invaders. These invaders are detailed, telescopic constructions that allow green pods to hang or then be grafted on a newly growing urban forest. Network Strategies imply process, movement and change and the invaders likewise move in and around the mall. Flexibility and innovation allows the leggy structures to straddle existing environments and space, creating new interstitial vegetal environment zones and new liminal green spaces between Downtown and Uptown.

3 Mediations/ Mutations

Careful, innovative tectonic devices cut through the body of the Deadmall to open up the green mutations possible. Language itself propels ideas, introduces new models for the ‘working site’: the abandoned zone (inactive zones) - bypass zones, ruins and runway lighting - convenient locations - cyber screens - blue works - drop zones – new courier concept ‘dropped’ around the site (mailbox sites) - flight path, gargoyles and glitches - the landing strip/ looped zones (signage and lighting) light boxes - navigations and (no) smoking zones - the margins - the repetition of ruins - platforms/open site/pauses/ inclined projections, surfaces, parking bowls and amphitheatres - optical fibre runs - tracking walls / twilight zones. Language is reclaimed and taken back from architecture. A green scenario – beyond residue - begins to breathe life back into the ‘corpse’.

4 Existing to proposed - material changes
The size of the existing mall (682,000 sq.ft) is re-assessed in relation to potential scenarios; the micro-cosmic city world. Extra space proposed can follow the following scheme but clearly will depend on the scenario favoured: 200,000sq.ft indoor park + internal grafts, 100,000 sq.ft lightweight roof structures including 100,000 sq.ft projected entertainment area and media roof, 100,000 open contoured asphalt, parking bowls, sports zones picnic and outdoor event spaces. Existing construction will be respected wherever possible whilst infill structural incisions (steel joist, & structural steel framing) will infuse the park underbelly with a new light. Mutations and newly grafted constructions consist of glass, structural glass, steel framed/braced structures, telescopic machinery, modular crane elements plus specialised materials (fibre glass, timber, mesh, recycled materials etc.) Re-framing the existing Downtown will be integrated into the punch strategies; the concept of elevation will dissolve into more liquid facades; entrances are multiple, exits unlikely and far from dangerous.

5 the brautigan

The brautigan will be irresistible, lower-case magic. It is the new mediated lobby for visitor, local or tourist. It is the floating platform (service ducted, suspended airspace environment) which literally uses the existing mall roof and shoots over as an interface, a connecting tissue. The lower-case brautigan is a promenade, a stroll, the panorama-passage, a multi-user domain utilising the latest wireless technology, a new but instantly dated non-linear interactive architectural browser, a google space hijacked for the community. A series of light, tubular structural-glass, timber and steel, extruded structures snake through the existing atrium snaking out along Uptown, and extending with optic fibre drop down zones to Downtown. A light, suspended airspace becomes the floating ‘living’ room of the locality, with literal glass ceilings, liquid surfaces and sky monitors. Float on your back in deep saline waters, and you will know what we mean.

6 Safe House

This is a surveillance scenario including control centre, a house of comforting, using innovations in remote technology, where wireless communications becomes a routing centre for Bigtown. Design of spaces in collaboration with security concerns will explore safe-house ideas and surveillance strategies which encourage crime-free design solutions, web-cam walls and moving screens. The liquid virtual wrapping of downtown becomes part of a series of open self-monitored environments. Nodal ‘security’ zones within the complex allow the development to integrate and respond to new media technologies. Careful use of electronic screens and the ‘remote city’ will allow new surveillance potential to help community security and identity. Architecture is also about confidence. The confidence to re-claim and mediate life outside pre-crime.

7 Nightspace

At night the mall-city, 24-7, take on its night-form, with the connection to the runway and franchise pods this will lead eventually to the development of the 24-hour total night space; with the illuminated crane-scanners and animal invaders, this forms a total installation. Externally the site is an illuminated landscape where light sensors activate parking routes and patterns and nighttime skateboarding and extreme sports centre co-exist amongst the ramped platforms and the parking bowls. The Hotel Architecture, the various lantern pavilions above the Meme Centre and The Vacant Lot Centre for Performing Arts alert the nighttime user from afar. Night is the affordable lounge. This is far from impossible!
8 The Mediatèque

Bit-map, torrent and j-peg pixel-bashed environment with back-up zones are devoted to destroying the privilege of the instant image - (hourly) data screens, moving walls (stocks and shares: jpeg worlds/ kludge / the kudzu) - hypertext hangouts and holding patterns – one of the main attraction and entrances to the Interface - alphabet centre + new kindergarten and hotel concept; a dialogue between the real and the virtual real, sand castles and playgrounds, fairy tales, manifestos all shifting into virtual game sites. Balanced by The Cry of the Toad Centre for Minorities, a re-assemblage of neighbourhood ‘loss’ - the very social and economic moves necessary to re-animate the mall must be integrated with the energy of the various sub-cultures and minorities within the district and locality. The 3D Print Centre will become more and more crucial as it combines with the Meme Machine Centre (moving walls membranes - quicktime / slowtime), Memento Stations - paging platforms & virtual wraps/video environments devoted to the failures to be contemporary and the advantages of ignorance: the Vacant Lot becomes a community performing arts theatre, an auditioning centre for ‘survival’.

9 The Extremities

The Extreme Weather Chasers Centre is a contemporary monitoring and museum of weather - specific for Texas - sky, tornado monitoring cube, hurricane path monitoring centre-tornados/ global satellite systems, telescoping and world weather guides. Known as Skylining (solar visiting structures) the sky-highs are the extremities of the city: the vigilance viewing platform and animal-extending sky-lights make clear that the mantra for a mediated urbanism is rammed home: way out there is also here.

6 TAKING REVENGE ON THE ASPHALT

Out of Site strategies – everything that happens has already happened - the incremental and mediated nature of regaining the mall, structuring staged economic and commercial investment will allow the architectural work to be an operative ‘site’. Bigtown redevelops in response to the community and potential re-investment. Contractual feasibility depends on confidence and responsibility. The rest is an imagination within reach. Nothing else will do! Way out there is also here. A mediated scenario is just that: it is the potential that seeks responsibility. No one runs away from the contemporary: a new civic existence of partial architectural gestures, an urban survival guide rejecting accomplished codes of current architecture. Media transforms media.

Out of site we imagine the remainder, the cars, the asphalt, the hinterland; that little dash from air-con to mall-con in Texas heat, we eat the chili and the peach but out there in the new landscape we must no longer allow asphalt to take revenge on the city. Aerodynamic (aero-dromic) shapes and Drone-sites with slight inclines in parking spaces transform the edge of the mall. Alternative sports areas are created through new re-surfacing techniques, new material skirting and even topping roof spaces. Car-admiring stops and skateboard contours, landscape and street sports intertwine in the evening. The Electronic Blossom is a re-structured lighting installation, helping to increase security and opening up the idea of the 24 hour mall.

7 THE MEDIATORS
Crime-free! Long live Bigtown when it is not so big. Strange overtones. Let’s not make the mistake. Yes, we are digitally laden but we are not perfectly attuned to this condition. How as overlapping beings could we be? Therein lies our mediated future. All that road going returns; everyone heads for the Anti-Mall! But the skateboarders are there first! The Mediators!
Mediated Urbanism Appendix 1 Pulping The City*

is an audio-visual remix of three video cartographies; cinematic counter-proposals to document, analyze and re-script the dynamics of the dispersed city. Re-thinking the fluidity and contingency of these stretched entropic landscapes, the project explore three navigations, moving from (1) project scripting to (2) video cartography and finally to (3) a mini architecture screener (3). Using ideograms, scores, scripts, indexes, photo-cartographies, and clips/mini-films, a new architecture verité (direct cinema) will be proposed.

(1) **Interface, Animal, & Brautigan** (Big Town Mall, Mesquite, TX)
By "taking revenge on the asphalt" this arch-cine is an architectural diagram-in-progress for future strategies of resuscitation of the existing deadmall.

(2) **The Bystander in Calgary** (twelve reverse architecture scripts ) Duchamps to ourselves - based on the theme of citystates, the bystander poses serious questions to an industry that collides with the thin world and a media that explodes city life into lost insights. In a mediated world of instant datedness, The Bystander is the only sane individual we can turn to; challenging any citation that attempts to bring them into a greater socio-cultural mix or sense of movement. The Bystander is always about to make that leap from the window joining other bystanders to become *duchamps to themselves*.

(3) **Pulping Detroit: on the road 2013** (iRreversible aRchitecture)
Pulping Detroit begins on the road, 387 miles over 8 miles or as Kerouac writes: *it’s anywhere road*
for anybody anyhow. A Detroit on-the-road video cartography is constructed as a trans-mediated script of urban questions and hanging non-sequiters.

* P.U.L.P. is an altered architecture working critical practice model (Heron-Mazy) contained within the acronym: Pedagogics – Urgency – Liminal – Portal. Heron-Mazy is the registered name for an architectural duo that overlaps and mediates just about every architectural code that needs unravelling. Their work is currently being assembled into the Heron-Mazy Critical Reader (2000-2015).
Figure 10. Herron-Meza Video Cartographies: Bylandter in Calgary
THE MEDIATED CITY CONFERENCE
Architecture_MPS; Ravensbourne; Woodbury University
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THE ‘HALLES’ REMODELLING PROJECT IN THE CENTRE OF PARIS: A CASE OF STUDY OF A POLITICALLY MEDIATED METROPOLITAN OPERATION?

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INTRODUCTION

I wish to contribute to discussions about the city as a ‘mediated’ phenomenon, with an emblematic French case study: the ‘Paris Halles’ (Paris Market). A large-scale remodeling project of this central Parisian area began in 2002, more than 30 years after the historical wholesale food market that was destroyed in 1969. The project and its mediation via communication documents, exhibitions, public meetings, an official website and, since the beginning of the work in 2010, the worksite itself, can be analyzed as a real political metropolitan mediated operation.

The Halles is truly a nerve centre of the entire Ile-de-France, a Region subjected to the imperatives of rail-oriented town planning that bases urban development on transport networks and has made the centre of Paris accessible within half an hour for over three million people\(^1\). As Pierre Sansot so aptly put it\(^2\), this space of inter-connection and transit, like all the city's stations, is a real “inside door”. While some find it oppressive, for others it is a mythical place associated with urban cultures and the banlieue\(^3\). Today it is the scene of a spectacular redevelopment project for which David Mangin was selected as the architect in 2004, in a competition widely publicized by the media\(^4\).

The work is currently underway after several years of debates and consultation that generated a profusion of discourses and visual productions by various stakeholders. The public can now see emerging, day by day, the famous "Canopée" designed by architects Patrick Berger and Jacques Anziutti, and which is an emblematic figure of this project and of its reshaping of underground/surface relations on a neighbourhood scale. As one of the achievements of Bertrand Delanoë, Mayor of Paris from March 2001 to April 2014, the "Halles project" – often presented by Anne Hidalgo, former Deputy Mayor in charge of planning and architecture, and now Mayor of Paris – can be considered as a particularly successful undertaking in political communication. But what about the metropolitan dimension of a project presented as an answer to "major metropolitan challenges”? Between current onsite practices and the images projected, how are the various spatial and social scales articulated in this reinvention of the centre which, more implicitly than explicitly, has a distinct discourse on its relations with its periphery\(^7\).

In this paper I will examine this discourse in relative terms by comparing the results of a long ethnological survey started in 2005 as part of my PhD research\(^5\) and an analysis of the various mediations of the redevelopment project\(^6\). This comparison of timescales and modes of action and representation raises questions on the enchanted sociability anticipated by renovation projects that incorporate into their plans uses which the current engineering and functioning of these places still preclude.
I. PARISIANS' DISENCHANTMENT WITH THE HALLES: REJECTION OF ITS METROPOLITAN DIMENSION?

In early 2011 the metallic fences closed around the “Forum des Halles”, hiding from public view the first work on the regeneration of the centre of Paris. Rows of promotional boards concerning this vast architectural and town planning operation were attached to them. Many passers-by slowed down to look at the images, commenting on the changes to the garden, trying to peek through the slits to see the earth-movers digging a new "Halles hole" ("trou des Halles"), as the first urban planning project at the end of the sixties was nick-named. The atmosphere in no way resembles that described by witnesses of that period, who saw the demolition of the former legendary “Halles de Paris” leaving a strange and threatening void in the very heart of the capital city. Unlike the “Pavillons Baltard” which had been destroyed against the will of the residents and many collectives of architects, artists and French and foreign political personalities, those designed by Willerval in the 1980s found few defenders and were ready to be demolished against a backdrop of general indifference. The new "Halles campaign" has many detractors but few of them criticize it in the name of a heritage or social life to preserve.

The metropolitan vocation of the “Forum des Halles” does not seem unrelated to its poor image or its relatively bad reputation, with regard to both its initial urban planning and the people who frequent it. From the design stages, the technical conditions of metropolization (the deployment and interconnection of transport infrastructure at the origin of the strongly-criticized project) were met with disapproval. In the 1960s the project seemed to be a classic example of potentially difficult relations between architects, planners and transport engineers. Today's debates are reactivating, albeit in a more consensual mood, those of the time concerning the primacy of functionality and planning over architecture.
The “Forum des Halles”, a polymorphous project, was presented as a set of interconnected elements, without the points of view organized by each space allowing for junctions to be established between them. It defied description or a global perspective. While there are effectively architecturally distinct spaces offering different qualities in terms of volume, light and sound, on the whole the Forum’s space is underpinned by a labyrinth logic. Irrespective of the arrangements of its various "places", the Forum only really seems to be associated with its famous “niveau -3” (“level -3”). Situated just above the RATP (public transport) area, this level organizes the most common part of what here, at the Halles, plays out between the limbo of metro and suburban trains, and the neighbourhood outside with which it has no direct connection. This level seems to reflect a popular metropolitan attraction, as both the clientele and the position and distribution of the various shops attest. The space of inter-connection of the RER (express suburban metro) – nicknamed the "flipper" because users seem to be propelled in all directions, miraculously avoiding collision with other users and the immense columns – is accessed through heavy metal doors that are constantly slamming open and shut onto corridors leading to yet other corridors. City-dwellers who visit this neighbourhood cannot escape these movements: the crowd is thrown into the “Rue Basse”, a sort of main crossing of the Forum, between the RATP area and the main exit, the “Porte Lescot”. In this relatively narrow space with a low ceiling, individuals are nothing but bodies, thrust against one another, barely avoiding one another.

This teeming atmosphere of the modern Halles is a less enchanted continuation of the popular imaginary of the old Halles. In past years people went there to mix with the riffraff at all hours of the day or night. Today, the capital's former "belly" as the French writer Emile Zola used to describe it, now devoted to the leading international brands, absorbs metropolitan flows, centralizes commuter migrations, and catalyzes paths before redirecting them away. Associated with the massive arrival of "youths from the banlieue" and the Hip-Hop movement, of which it has effectively been a French Mecca, the Halles is in a sense the archetype of the negative image of the urban crowd: dense, compelling and worrying. Over 45% of the people who "go down" to the Halles come from the peripheries, and their average age is around 28. For many Parisians, the "zoneurs", "junkies" and "rastas" of the garden, along with the "banlieue rappers", cause a general feeling of insecurity that actually existed before them. The adjacent “Rue de la Petite Truanderie” and “Rue de la Grande Truanderie” still bear witness to that.

The lack of attention paid to its spaces of transition contributes the Halles' oppressiveness. The place feels like a space of concentration acting out its role as an "inside door", a type of throttle. The general organization of the neighbourhood that the pedestrian streets distinguish from the rest of the city extends this effect of congestion. Physical constraints weigh heavily on the arrangement of visibilities at the Forum des Halles. The reorganization of access paths and the improvement of inside/outside articulations are at the heart of the redevelopment project that, from this point of view, is a historical
continuity. Although it is being done in the shadow of the spectacular “Canopée”, the remaking of the modes of circulation from the RER and the metro to the surface is one of the key aspects of the rehabilitation.

This is one of the first things that an analysis of this project as political mediation teaches us. Whereas the urbanization challenge essentially concerns the redevelopment of underground transport, its modes of access, and the articulation of the transport networks, this project started with the surface, that is, its parts that are above ground and therefore visible: the “Canopée” and the public garden (especially the "adventure garden" presented as a "recreational space", "innovative", "favouring learning about life", reserved for children and supervised by facilitators)\textsuperscript{10}. It was in this movement of making visible/invisible that the image of the new heart of Paris was built. I am now going to show that it was the result of a significant process of removal of the contemporary uses and users that tended to contribute to the neighbourhood's negative image.

II. REMOVING THE CONTEMPORARY: PLAYING DOWN THE METROPOLITAN FACT

![Figure 4. Halles, June 2007,](image)

While many urban, architectural and social studies were conducted before the architecture competition\textsuperscript{11}, they no longer seem to be considered important. The project itself and the communication about it now seem irrelevant to the present, apart from that of the building site, which receives extensive coverage. The site is indeed truly staged, and is now open to the public, which is invited under certain conditions to see the building "show" underway. The installation of the “Canopée” took place before everyone's eyes. Each of the construction phases is the subject of a particular scenography, like the testing of materials in scale-one prototypes, which curious residents have been able to see on the site itself. Many visits are organized. The dimensions of this new glass and metal cover, presented as a technical feat aimed at reconciling Parisians with their memories of the old Halles, make it visible from several spots in the neighbourhood. The “Canopée” is higher than the carefully maintained fences bearing educational information about the operation: chronology of the neighbourhood, origins of the concepts used, representations of the sources of inspiration, etc. An "observatory" was even set up in 2012 to monitor the building work from an elevated point of view (three metres high). The panorama thus created appears to do away with any blind spots. This way of enhancing the image of the work is reinforced by the description of its most concrete aspects and by highlighting the various stakeholders involved: architects, engineers, builders, security agents, cleaners, etc. The chronicle, the centrepiece of this reduction of present time to the monitoring of the work, is materialized by numerous publications. The first copy of Les Halles métropole that accompanied the "launching of the operational phase of the project", claimed to monitor "news on the redevelopment of the Halles neighbourhood". It was replaced by a larger magazine (about twenty pages): the 'mag' of the Halles neighbourhood's redevelopment", tellingly named Demain les Halles ("Tomorrow the Halles").
Whether it be on Internet, in brochures or special media, on the fences cordoning off the building site, or at special exhibitions at the Hotel de Ville (the city hall) or within the Forum, communication on the project juxtaposes (virtual) projected images with those, stamped with nostalgia, of the old Halles (photos, prints, engravings). The photos of the most well-known French photographer, Robert Doisneau, have for example been exhibited several times since the launching of the first consultations in 2002.

The current situation seems to be suspended between a past whose mythology is returned to the foreground and an enchanted future, through multiple rhetorical and enunciatory processes. This overshadowing of the contemporary corresponds to a form of minimization of the metropolitan vocation of the place, and of the potentially conflictual nature of the uses of this central urban space.

III. TOWARDS A PUBLIC SPACE ON THE SCALE OF THE METROPOLIS?

On the users of the Halles, often described as “inhabitants of the metropolis”, and occasionally euphemistically associated with “diversity” and “mixité” (cultural mixing), very little is actually said. No social and ethnic "diversity" is visible. Whereas David Mangin and his team (SEURA) introduced a faithful representation of users of the Forum in the book that they dedicated to them, the same cannot be said of the synthetic images that show a crowd of white city-dwellers strangely distant from the everyday reality. Apart from this visual neutralization, the “voyageurs franciliens” (”Ile-de-France travellers”) as they are called, seem to be reduced to nothing more than the flows they represent in the orchestration of a more fluid and efficient mobility, from the platforms of the RER.

Yet the project reactivates the myth of the origins of the said "Forum", that of creating an "underground" city that is "welcoming" and offers real "public spaces". Officially devoted to collective appropriation, this central urban space whose very name brings to mind the political utopia characteristic of its years of construction, has from its origins – and more recently with debates over
its regeneration – been given the positive qualification of a "public space" after authors like Hannah Arendt, Richard Sennett or Isaac Joseph. Effectively without entry rights, equipped with public facilities, and frequented by users from all social and geographical horizons, the Forum corresponds in many respects to the practical utopia defined by the French theoretician of public space: Isaac Joseph. Its internal rules, far more restrictive than the regulations applying to public roads, yet to which it refers, have established for example a sort of partial curfew in the in-between spaces. The company Unibail, the Paris municipality and the RATP share the management of the Forum's spaces and organize the maintenance of order according to their own procedures, based for example on differentiated security systems.

Unlike the many discourses in which the “Carreau des Halles” is simply a continuation of the streets outside, the Forum is a distinctly separate space. Les Halles seem more than ever subjected to a veritable circulatory paradigm in which the engineering of the crowds reinforces spontaneous practices. Everything is aimed at preventing the crowd from stopping or coagulating, so that the passer-by is not only the main figure but above all a compulsory one among the Forum's users. The steps outside the most visited shop (the FNAC) are not sprayed several times a day, as in the past, to chase away tramps and other undesirables, but they are under close surveillance by numerous agents who call to order the uninformed every fifteen minutes. The undesirables of the Halles, those that the system controlling fluidity targets the most directly, rarely stop at this place in the Forum. These young men readily labelled as "banlieue youths", who are doubly stigmatized for their supposed geographical and ethnic origins and their style or the colour of their skin, have generally internalized the constraints weighing on them and master the space by physically moving through it.

Only one concession has been made in the form of a homage to these youths and the urban practices that they have contributed to having recognized in the past, by making the heart of Paris the French capital of Hip-Hop inspired by the United States: the creation of a new dedicated cultural space. This seems however to be much more of a new form of political and institutional harnessing than of a reopening of possibilities, for it has actually no longer been possible, for a long time now, to organize musical meetings of dance "battles" at the Halles, outside of institutional frameworks.

Apart from the creation of an institutional space devoted to Hip-Hop and the announcement of future gatherings, it is legitimate to wonder whether "this living place" will not require a total shift in its management policy if it is to function socially as a metropolitan public space.

CONCLUSION

The media surrounding the Halles project, a real instrument of political communication for the City of Paris, tends to neutralize existing conflicts or tensions between the centre and the periphery. Despite the stated ambition of recreating a large-scale metropolitan public space in the very centre of the city, the implicitly constructed view discretely prolongs an old injunction to maintain fluid sociability coupled with a control of what can be observed and of forms of self-exhibition. The least desirable users, those precisely who were not, or hardly, involved in the consultations prior to the studies defining the project, and in the architecture competition, are also removed from the project's mediation.

Moreover, these young people from the periphery who participate so actively in the popular atmosphere of the neighbourhood would certainly, in many cases, have wanted the Halles not to change, and to remain the field of collective wandering, of the dizziness of being together, and of open confrontation with the otherness that they associate with Paris.

At the time of the Greater Paris and the celebration of the metropolis by all the actors of Ile-de-France, the Halles project ultimately seems to clearly reaffirm a certain Parisianism at the centre of Paris.
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3 In France center of the city is much more valuable than « suburb ». I decide to keep the word « banlieue » in French because it has a negative meaning that the English translation doesn’t express.

4 In 2002, the City of Paris embarked on public consultations concerning the redevelopment of the Halles. Forty meetings, four public exhibitions, and eight surveys were carried out in this respect. The study to define the project was concluded with an architecture competition that received wide media coverage. The winner, chosen in 2004, was David Mangin and the SEURA team. Patrick Berger and Jacques Anziutti’s project was selected for the underground part, including the railway station. The operation, that is scheduled to be completed in 2016, has four main partners: the Région Île-de-France, the Syndicat des Transports d’Île-de-France (STIF – the transport organizing authority), the RATP (which exploits the entire transport hub), and the Société Civile du Forum des Halles de Paris (for the shopping mall). See the official website of the “Les Halles métropole” project. http://www.parisleshalles.fr


8 RATP

9 *A truand* is a gangster, and the term previously also referred to a vagrant. [Transl.]

10 Jean-Jacques Berhard, in *Demain les Halles* (November 2012): 8. This garden was inaugurated in 2012 by Bertrand Delanoë.


RE-IMAGINING ETHNIC ENCLAVES: CONTESTED IDENTITIES AND TRANSNATIONALISM IN LOS ANGELES’ KOREATOWN

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INTRODUCTION:

Living in increasingly dense urban environments that are rapidly shifting, we often lose sight of the human element of urbanization. It is the people who move through and inhabit cities that shape its cultural history and comprise the often ephemeral and under-represented narratives of city spaces. How can new digital platforms create the opportunity for developing innovative ways to envision our sense of place? This paper presents the interactive online cultural history The Seoul of Los Angeles: Contested Identities and Transnationalism in Immigrant Space. Engaging issues in contemporary media studies including global/local relations, transnational ethnicity and identity, and new media and urban studies, this project looks at the sociocultural networks shaping immigrant communities and how local neighborhoods negotiate a sense of place within an increasingly globalized culture.

Currently, Los Angeles has the largest population of Koreans in the United States living outside of Korea. Nicknamed the “L.A. district of Seoul City”, this work examines Los Angeles’ Koreatown as a case study for re-imagining immigrant enclaves as homogenous entities. In one of the most ethnically identified neighborhoods in Los Angeles, Koreatown, a community with clear spatial boundaries, with a long history whose immigrants originated from a country as powerfully nationalistic and ethnically homogenous as Korea, even in Koreatown it is impossible to define the community along any singular ethnic or cultural lens. Though the majority of businesses are owned by struggling first generation Korean immigrants or, in some cases, financed by Korean transnational capital, the everyday space of this community is largely inhabited by a mix of immigrants. This complex network of national affiliations, each with its own distinct cultural history, converge in the urban space of Koreatown. This convergence results in a contestation of dominant conceptions of ethnic enclaves being understood as homogenous. This makes us re-imagine what we think we understand about immigrant enclaves – they are increasingly becoming polycentric and multidimensional globally.

Combining design, documentary and interactive media with research on changes in multiethnic communities constituting rapidly developing urban neighborhoods in global cities, this research generates experimental approaches to mapping community histories. Mapping is not conceived as static, but rather a dynamic system that changes according to the shifts in culture and community that characterize any geographic place. How can this system be visualized in order to read a space with newly informed imaginations? This work creates platforms that connect people more deeply to each other’s histories embedded in the geographies of place. It uses technology to make invisible or unspoken stories visible and rise to the surface to become part of the fabric of globalized urban living. The outcome of this is to help disturb histories of forgetting, to help disturb the negation of unrepresented stories in diasporic space.
“When I first arrived in Los Angeles, I thought it was Korea. There was no way to tell it was the United States because on the streets there were signs in Korean. There were a lot of Koreans too.”

This was an observation made in 1999 by a young Korean man who had been raised in Brazil and had moved to Los Angeles with his family. His parents were among a group of Koreans who moved to Brazil starting in 1962 as a result of the South Korean government passing of an Overseas Emigration Law encouraging emigration as a means of alleviating unemployment and controlling population during the post-war period. Many of these Korean emigrants developed businesses in the garment industry and some later moved to Los Angeles, attracted by the possibility of improved economic opportunities in its garment industry as well as by the growing community of Koreans residing in the city.

The impression on the young Korean-Brazilian man that Los Angeles was understood as Korea is striking on two registers. The first is that it reflects the degree to which Los Angeles and its Korean community have become representative of Korean culture itself, even in the consciousness of second generation Koreans who had never visited Korea. The second is that it suggests the spatial practice of Korean cultural identity in urban development is mobile and transnational, not necessarily confined within defined national borders but rather, transcending them. Emphasizing this point, in 2012, Koreatown in Los Angeles was described as “functionally a distant district of Seoul—in capital as well as in culture, in both commerce and cuisine.” With its explosion of spas, restaurants and nightclubs, most visitors understand Koreatown as an extension of Seoul culture, but what most people may not know is that the majority of inhabitants who comprise its residential and working class population are not Korean, but Latino. Though the majority of businesses are owned by struggling first generation Korean immigrants or, in some cases, financed by Korean transnational capital, the everyday space of this community is largely inhabited by a mix of immigrants from countries around the globe, including Korea, China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru. Before the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act abolished the national origins quota system that had structured American immigration policy since the 1920s, most of the Asians in the United States were from Japan, mainland China, and the Philippines. Since then, immigration from Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, India and other parts of Asia have significantly increased. These newer Asian immigrants, combined with the Latin American immigrants who make up the fastest growing minority group in Los Angeles, comprise the residents of Koreatown. This complex

Figure 1. A still from the documentary film “Layers of US” about Brazilian Koreans in Los Angeles (Miriam Kim, 1999)
network of national affiliations, each with its own distinct cultural history, converges in the urban space of Koreatown. This convergence results in a contestation of dominant conceptions of ethnic enclaves in urban theory being understood as ethnically homogenous.

Using Koreatown in Los Angeles as a case study, the interactive online cultural history *The Seoul of Los Angeles: Contested Identities and Transnationalism in Immigrant Space* examines how immigrant communities shape a sense of place and cultural identity and how these local ethnic communities in large urban cities reconfigure our understanding of transnational identity. Though transnationalism is usually framed more broadly in terms of the mobility of cultural and economic commodities between nations globally, I argue that transnationalism can be framed more locally by examining the sociocultural flows within ethnic enclaves in large urban cities like Los Angeles. Framing transnationalism locally allows for a place-based examination that magnifies and centralizes the narratives of underrepresented ethnic groups that inhabit local communities. In other words, transnationalism and its effects need to be experienced through a local and not solely global lens in ethnic enclaves like Koreatown. A focus on place-based identity formation provides what geographer Tim Cresswell calls “the ontological grounding for subaltern strategies of ‘localization’.” The Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA) is one such example of a grassroots community organization resisting the forces of transnational capital to represent the rights of multi-ethnic workers and residents of Koreatown. Rather than rallying around ethnicity or race as a unifying rubric for the organization, KIWA focused instead on class as a rubric around which solidarity could be created among its multi-ethnic members. Founded by Danny Park and a group of progressive Korean activists as a response to the 1992 Los Angeles riots (known as “Sa-I-Gu” in the Korean community), KIWA is a grassroots, non-profit organization that serves the working-class residential community of Koreatown. As such, most of its members and constituents are Latino and Korean. Formerly called the Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates, KIWA changed its name to Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance to more accurately reflect the demographics of the community it serves. KIWA is one of the few organizations that has effectively struggled to create inter-ethnic solidarity around larger issues affecting all residents of Koreatown. By revealing the inter-relationships of such local transnationalisms, this project shows how immigrant ethnic enclaves can no longer be understood as homogenous and fixed but rather, are unstable and constructed out of a network of complex, multiple affiliations to race, histories and nations. This serves to destabilize notions of place and space as static, showing instead, that they are never finished and in a constant state of negotiation and process.

This sense of place that is unfinished and in a constant state of becoming is what Michel de Certeau describes as the space of practice. De Certeau characterizes place not in terms of geographic locality but in social activity. Place is made and re-made through the daily iterative social practices of people who inhabit their everyday spaces. Reimagining place as a space of practice allows for “the creative production of identity rather than an a-priori label of identity.” Though De Certeau offers a useful alternative to the essentialist notion of place as being rooted, his concept of place remains relatively abstract and does not address the politics of social activity nor the influence of race, ethnicity or class in shaping a sense of place. Doreen Massey, on the other hand, argues for the importance of a global sense of place even within the local. Like de Certeau, her conception of place is unbounded but she adds the importance of thinking of the politics of mobility, linking the social activity of place-making to the mobility of global exchange and forces of capital. Koreatown combines the social activity that constitutes place-making and its global influences. This project brings into the foreground the tension between retaining a sense of national rootedness and homogenous identity in the consciousness of Korean immigrants and the inevitable push towards a more heterogeneous identity formation within multi-ethnic enclaves.

In framing the relationship between place and transnationalism, the work of Arjun Appadurai and Aihwa Ong intervene in discussions on globalization by addressing the human subject within its system and propose transnationalism and cultural mobility as a way to think of place as unbounded and identity as deterritorialized. According to Ong, the term “transnational” became popularized in
the 1970s because global companies were rethinking their strategies, shifting from the “vertical integration model of the multinational firm to the horizontal dispersal of the transnational corporation.” Ong uses mobility as a means to gauge immigrant relationships to nation and as a way to de-stabilize a fixed construct of national identity. She presents the flexible geographical and social movements of Hong Kong business people as an example of the “flexible subject” who embody the split between a state-imposed identity and personal identity.

This identity, however, is not a simple binary, of being either a national or a nomad. Rather, it’s a negotiation among different geographical and social positions that include family structures, the state, and capital. This negotiation is embodied in the movement of the nomadic or flexible subject whose formation of identity is characterized more by instability and flux. Ong celebrates the value of flexibility and instability in the construction of identity stating, “…while mobility and flexibility have long been part of the repertoire of human behavior, under transnationality the new links between flexibility and the logics of displacement, on the one hand, and capital accumulation, on the other, have given new valence to such strategies of maneuvering and positioning. Flexibility, migration, and relocations, instead of being coerced or resisted, have become practices to strive for rather than stability.” Similarly, Korean transnational capital has created increasingly mobile middle class Korean immigrants who cultivate flexible affiliations to nation, traversing in-between nations. Significantly, the period in the 1970s when the term transnationalism was popularized coincides with the period when the large South Korean conglomerates, known as “chaebol,” began to form and whose current investment of transnational capital is transforming the urban development of Los Angeles’s Koreatown.

Though the concept of flexible citizenship as an aspect of transnational identity is useful in formulating a deterritorialized sense of place and identity, it is limited in that its focus remains an extroverted conception of transnationalism that focuses attention on more privileged communities. What Ong does not address are the introverted, local effects of transnational capital on the development of urban spaces like Koreatown and the subsequent effects on a different class of people who maintain little or uneven access to the benefits transnational capital may provide. Both Appadurai and Ong, in privileging unbounded, outward mobility in their conception of transnational identity formation, neglect to adequately examine the very real social consequences of transnational capital accumulation on disenfranchised ethnic and working class communities in places like Koreatown. The majority of its community is made up of populations who may not always benefit from an idealized concept of increased mobility and flexibility. This group comprises a significant component of the residential working class in Koreatown who struggle with the very real possibility of forced mobility, of displacement due to transnational real-estate investment and the subsequent change in housing affordability in their neighborhood. Those whose sense of place is a constant negotiation between stability and instability within very specific economic and social boundaries understand mobility and flexibility on a different register. Koreatown reconfigures our understanding of transnationalism to include not only extroverted global networks, but also the internal networks expressed through complex interactions within local ethnic communities.

If one of the outcomes of transnationalism is a deterriorialized sense of national identity, then Los Angeles is its urban manifestation–celebrated by geographers as the ultimate, postmodern, polynucleated configuration of multiple national identities. As Edward Soja describes it, “Everywhere seems also to be in Los Angeles. …And from every quarter’s teeming shores have poured a pool of cultures so diverse that contemporary Los Angeles represents the world in connected urban microcosms, reproducing in situ the customary colors and confrontations of a hundred different homeland.” The developmental history of Los Angeles by historians and geographers, and their characterization of the city as a constellation of segregated and homogenous ethnic communities, is succinctly summarized by David E. James in his discussion of Los Angeles culture and community formation. James outlines the origins of ethnic enclave formation starting from the observation made in 1894 by Charles A. Stoddard that “Southern California is made up of groups who often live in
isolated communities, continuing their own customs, language, and religious habits and associations.”

12 Stoddard was quoted by Carey McWilliams to support his characterization made in 1946 of Los Angeles’s composition of “social and ethnic islands, economically interrelated but culturally disparate.”

13 Following this rubric, urban theorists, the most influential among them being Soja, have assumed that these distinct though isolated communities are culturally and ethnically homogenous. This conception of Los Angeles’s ethnic communities as being segregated from each other is further emphasized, as James points out, if you consider the more recent formation of “little” Asian cities such as Tokyo or Saigon, which have “fashioned themselves between the cultural patterns of their originals and those of their new environment, forging a new local life for often globally distant identities.”

14 Although I would include Koreatown in this pattern of replicating its cultural signifiers especially through the restaurants, spas and other products of Korean cultural consumption that dominate its urban landscape, I would argue that Koreatown as an ethnic enclave makes a radical departure from the assumed homogeneity and segregation of ethnic community formation in Los Angeles posited by urban theorists up to this point. Despite being one of the most ethnically identified neighborhoods in Los Angeles, Koreatown is incredibly heterogeneous in its ethnic makeup.

What distinguishes Koreatown is the heterogeneity within its ethnic enclave, its contested identities or the tensions not only ethnically but along the lines of class, nationalities, and generations that make it impossible to characterize as simply homogenous. Moreover, Koreatown is largely understood as transnational in that its cultural and economic flows move between the U.S. and South Korea. However, Koreatown’s network of nationalisms is incredibly diverse, consisting not only of Korean, but others including Mexican, El Salvadoran, Guatemalan, Filipino and Bangladeshi. These sub-communities within Koreatown interact daily with each other, constituting the spatial practices that create the economic and cultural backbone of the community.

Koreatown makes us re-imagine ethnic enclaves by radically breaking from previous assumptions that ethnic communities have a stable homogeneity within them. Together, these characteristics combine to make Koreatown a place in which the configuration of transnationalism is extended to include relationships in-between differing local community nationalisms, and thereby, reconfiguring transnational to be understood on a local rather than entirely global register.

A Platform for Community Storytelling:
Using a combination of original interviews, film clips, archival photographs, mapping techniques and written material, *The Seoul of Los Angeles: Contested Identities and Transnationalism in Immigrant Space* is presented as a scholarly website and digital archive conceived as a platform for community storytelling. It utilizes a combination of open-source web tools to present a unique interface design that reflects the multiple and uneven nature of urban development and transnational identity. It uses the archive or database as a way to address the complex relationships that comprise Koreatown’s socio-cultural history and is organized around four topics: “Early Pioneers,” which describes the establishment of Korean settlement in Los Angeles in the early 1900s and before 1965; “Re-mapping Immigrant Spaces: Koreatown after 1965,” which describes the development of contemporary Koreatown in the period following the 1965 immigration act—a period that saw the arrival of a significantly increased number of newer Asian immigrants, among them Korean, to Los Angeles; “Sa-I-Gu: The 1992 Los Angeles Riots,” which looks at the struggle for ethnic coalition building surrounding the riots and how the tensions among the various ethnic communities comprising Koreatown’s population magnified the heterogeneity within the community; and “Transnational Identities,” which looks at how Koreatown reconfigures our understanding of ethnic enclaves and transnationalism in local communities.

In order to explain how the archive and database are useful as structuring devices for exploring the complex relationships comprising Koreatown’s socio-cultural history, I must first provide some definitions. I will start first with the archive. Archives are traditionally thought of as collections of historical material housed in cultural institutions and often representative of official, state-sanctioned accounts of historical memory. As such, they are presumed to be fixed both spatially within the places they are housed, and epistemologically within dominant historical narratives. With the introduction of digital media and the resulting transformation of archival information, documents that were once rarified and not easily viewed are now available, through digital reproduction, to a much wider public using technologies like the Internet. Furthermore, the creation of archives is no longer limited to institutional practice. Open-source, social networking tools have allowed the general public to
become active participants and creators of shared knowledge production. Such developments have introduced new considerations in terms of online archives that include the relationship between database structures in which archives are organized, and their relationship to narrative as a means of constructing meaning. These developments have resulted in a reconsideration of the archive and of knowledge production as mutable, open-ended constructs that are no longer representative of any singular view but are inclusive of multiple and sometimes contradictory perspectives.

In her discussion on the relationship between database and narrative, media theorist Marsha Kinder defines database narrative as “narratives whose structure exposes the dual processes of selection and combination that lie at the heart of all stories and are crucial to language: certain characters, images, sounds, events and settings are selected from series of categories and combined to generate specific tales.” Kinder points out another characteristic of digital archives that is tied to its mutability—the aspect of open-endedness and incompleteness that creates new possibilities through the recombination of modular items in a database into a variety of aesthetic forms including narrative. The open-ended structure of database narrative resists any totalizing construction of meaning. Rather, they “diffuse the force of master narratives, which can no longer be seen as merely natural or, even more simply, the truth, because users are reminded that alternative versions of the story and new combinations of the components are always possible. Instead of master narratives, what emerges is a more open narrative field full of possibilities, which is in turn fueled by an underlying database that continues to grow.” The digital archive as database narrative makes us reconsider historical artifacts, not as fixed constructs representative only of official accounts of history, but as open systems that generate meaning through storytelling. Furthermore, as open systems, they invite the possibility of public intervention and interaction in the construction of cultural history.

Combining the structuring frameworks of the archive and database narrative, The Seoul of Los Angeles: Contested Identities and Transnationalism in Immigrant Space is designed as a platform for community storytelling that reconfigures the digital archive as a place for collective knowledge creation and transfer—a space that is inclusive of the conflicting and contested narratives that together form the complex and uneven development of transnational identities in ethnic enclaves. The project is designed to be a resource for exploring urban history through the embodied narratives of community members, scholars, artists and activists who, together, challenge the conception of ethnic enclaves as being fixed, homogenous constructs.

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Visit the following URL to view *The Seoul of Los Angeles* online cultural history: [http://seoulofla.com/](http://seoulofla.com/). Please note that the website is best viewed using the Google Chrome web browser.


14 David E. James, *The Sons and Daughters of Los*, 5.


WORKSHOP: CITIES IM-MEDIATED THROUGH METALEPSIS

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INTRODUCTION

Metalepsis, a figure of rhetoric, is essentially a management program for the space created within a double frame. What’s this? Between the recognizable frame created by the conventions of media and an implicit but often unrecognized frame constructed by discourse and perception, there exists a gap, a “nowhere” whose ambiguous status invites the imagination to conceive of various kinds of completion. In architecture, cities, landscapes, and works of art of all kinds this space allows for the possibility of “sites of exception.” The structure of these sites is remarkably constant across a wide range of media: it is a materialized void within which the imagination is able to operate under a condition of “unlimited semiosis.”

This metalepsis workshop adapts Gérard Genette’s contrasting functions of diegesis and mimesis to the psychoanalytic concept of cathexis (“investment”). Metalepsis shows how ideology and perception leave behind signatures in the spatial-temporal field. “Inventories” driven by fetish end in a collapse of ideological fantasies — a collapse that opens up theory to the immediacy of acts. Art in general and film in particular have been able to stylize this transition, and the workshop uses visual examples from painting (Velázquez, Magritte, Picasso) and film (The Gleaners and I, Mulholland Drive) to parse this break and play out its sequences of gaps and delays. Despite the intricacy of the theoretical implications, the results of this shift from ideology fetish (mediation) to act (immediacy) constitute the everyday reality of the city of popular culture. Metalepsis is recognizable in multiple commonplace but uncanny conditions. The workshop uses a shorthand notation based on standard uses of frames in art, literature, and film. The metalepsis workshop, in various forms, has been hosted by the University of Pennsylvania, Cleveland Urban Institute, Carleton University, Yale, LSU, NCSU, SUNY Buffalo, Washington–Alexandria Architecture Center, and, most recently, the ŽižekStudies Conference, Cincinnati.

INTRODUCTION

Of all McLuhan’s original contributions to communications theory, technology discourse, and concepts of contemporary urban culture, the “binary signifier” of hot and cold stands as the most problematic. It was McLuhan’s argument that “hot media” were those that required the audience to do little to consume the content. Movies were thus hot because everything was done on the screen, at high resolution within a narrow sensual range; little audience input was required. In contrast, television, which would seem to be a home version of the movies, was “cool” in McLuhan’s terminology, because it required greater involvement in contextualizing. With a cool medium, the viewer actively determines meaning, and extra engagement is needed because the source’s energy level is lower — correspondingly, the audience’s input must be higher.

As a formal descriptive system, the thermodynamic metaphor pleased almost no one. For example, what is being hot or cold? — the medium itself, its form, or the demands it makes on the audience?
The relation of “cool” to jazz failed to incorporate jazz’s own twist on the cool, epitomized by Miles Davis’s general detached demeanor as well as his famous album, Birth of the Cool (1957, Columbia Records). When be-bop evolved from “hot jazz” as a crucible to purify leitmotifs and perfect technical skills, cool and hot mixed like the ice cream and hot fruit of Bananas Foster. The stories of Minton’s Jazz Club sessions, where musicians would challenge each other to keep up to fast-paced glissando-crazed twists and turns, are famous. The cool of jazz’s cool reflects jazz’s own origins as “jas” or “jass,” i.e. “sex.” One could lose one’s self and be a “fool in love” or, with musical detachment, develop a form of control, presence, and readiness.

Although the binary system created confusion for many readers, McLuhan made it make sense contextually in Understanding Media. Its failure as a typology made for its success as a generator of ideas, comparisons, and critical considerations that made sense retroactively, despite the vagueness of the hot-cold idea. Those who have wanted to make the system fit, however, usually take up the notion of mediation. They claim that the terms are not so much opposites as poles. The important thing for this approach is to focus on the space in between as shades of gray, each term blending into the other. Consequently, extreme cases do not exist (despite McLuhan’s extensive topology of identifications). The search for mediated middle positions is a standard humanistic project, possibly deriving from Aristotle’s idea of the golden mean, a balance point that is simultaneously static and dynamic, able to include the contradictions implied by opposites. This could be generalized as the idea of “life as accommodation and compromise,” opposite the more Platonic idea of pure form, with its “impossible” and “inaccessible” purities.

FROM BINARY SIGNIFIER TO MATRIX

We argue that the conversion of McLuhan’s hot-cold binary into a system of gradations does not work; that, however confusing the definition of hot and cold as a thermodynamics of cultures’ reception of media, the difficulty itself leads to an option that promises more than the “shades of gray” approach. To describe this option and its significance for the dynamic of cities — cities that, in particular, embody cultures’ involvements with media — we must employ the idea of metalepsis: “the inclusion of framing elements within the contents of the frame”; but this is also, significantly, the body inside the body, the power of copulation, impregnation, gestation, birth — the matrix.

René Magritte’s famous painting, Ceci n’est pas un pipe, could possibly provide all that is needed to explain the frame as an epistemic device. The other side of metalepsis is the sexual—generative idea of the womb and place of origins. The vitality of the idea of the matrix was diluted as the word was quickly replaced in vernacular languages by other words (uterus, womb; chora, home, homeland). To be more precise, the matrix of the media polarity of hot and cold is a mediatrix, “the mother in-between,” a womb or pocket of excluded and exceptional meaning, a site of impossibility that combines with necessity, akin to James Joyce’s idea of epiphany.

Possibly, the Ur-example involves an equally religious origin: the Immaculate Conception of Christianity, the ultimate in sacred sexual events, but even here metalepsis alerts us to complications and nuances with broad implications. In one account Mary is impregnated through her ear; this is a metaphor for the word of God as a whispered love, a secret knowledge with generative power. Once “heard,” the word loses its strictly semantic—performative function within the chain of signifiers and takes on the ability to grow through a process of recursive self-definition. We use this concept to return the often abused term “autopoiesis” to its original sense. In the matrix, the womb of the virgin, conventional meaning dissociates, and the mediation it engages becomes im-mEDIATE. There is nothing more intimate, more immediate than conception through the impregnation of sound — an “acousmatic” word. And, there is nothing to be said about this spectacular convergence of love, sexuality, and the body that does not involve the logic of metalepsis.
To serve as a guide in this extension of metalepsis to include visual/formal framing, sexual generation (and the function of the relevant organs), and the autopoiesis of the matrix as both maternal-sexual and spatial, we need to look at the case of the “pure antecedent”: terms that involve their opposite but, in so doing, also include a void, a gap in meaning, where the movement from one meaning to its opposite involves a small remainder. Curiously, such terms cluster around the function of sheltering. The host-guest complex is the most curious example. “Hostility” and “hospitality” stem from a single word (e.g. the Latin hostes) and possibly a single idea in many cultures. Running alongside is “host,” which is “ghost,” both taste (gast) and the laminar flow of spirit (Geist).

The emblem of these metaleptic combinations could be the haunted house or castle, as in Italo Calvino’s Castle of Crossed Destinies, where guests are transfixed by a magic spell. The fact that “sacred” is itself metaleptic (as both something highly regarded as well as obscene) allows the host-guest complex to combine with the Unheimlich, famously analyzed by Sigmund Freud. Freud proclaimed in the beginning of his famous essay that “home” and the “uncanny” were, etymologically as well as in terms of cultural practices that involved them, identical. The implications were Hegelian: that within identity itself was this capability for self-conversion, self-negation. The home was automatically uncanny, but the uncanny was also something attractive, alluring, erotic: i.e. a matrix. That the concept of home automatically falls into the spooky potentiality of the un-home means that houses, cities, and possibly whole nations are versions of the grave, something put out of sight but permanent as site: a perpetual source for the voice and potential for return that only the dead can effect (apophrades).

Paul Wheatley, in his examination of the seven locations of urban origins, has advanced the case that cities are based on this voice, present at the sites of the dead. The popular culture version is pure Stephen King: a suburban development is built on top of an old burial ground. Residents begin to experience acts of vengeance, from mysteriously crashing glassware to the more extreme subsidence...
of foundations and liquification of floors and walls. We need go no further with this comparison; the images of ghouls coming out of swimming pools is standard horror story furniture.

Rather, it is our goal to show how metalepsis (1) is the only adequate theoretical means of addressing the essence of cities’ sheltering function; (2) how the multiplicity of seemingly contradictory functions and ideas is accommodated within a metaleptic structure; and (3) how McLuhan’s thermodynamic system can be extended not by developing the middle of a binary signifier but, rather, by “doing as McLuhan did,” i.e. seeing the interior of each term as a negative inscription, a para-site, a self-expanding and self-destroying substantial “biomass.” The much-abused idea of autopoiesis actually involves the idea of continuance through negation and contradiction. Whatever can contain its own destruction is also capable of life — life that is a series of “emergences” of unlikely forms and actions out of a simple base. The alternative to autopoiesis is instrumentalism of repetition, the uncontrolled proliferation of a cancer where negation has been eliminated or simply unplugged (compulsion, cliché, ideology, the oppression of technology). We advocate metalepsis as a “life over death” solution, an account of the im-mediacy of desire as act.

Much of contemporary theorizing about the architecture of the city is limited by an over-commitment to the use of “screen,” in thinking and in representation. The 2-sphere of the earth’s surface involves, whenever “flat” representations of it are made, unresolvable errors that require compromises of scale, projection, and shape. But, optical perception is spherical, time has its own curves and folds, and there is nothing Euclidean in the senses or experience apart from the desire to know (“flatly,” the projection to screens), and to be known by the Eleventh Century to Arabic, Lurianic, and Christian mystics, the zairja. This was primarily a diagrammatic schema, a matrix involving astrological and astronomical data as well as geometric devices taken from the arts of memory. The zairja was a computer — the first computer in fact — but the point of the zairja was not to make muddy thoughts clear but, rather, the reverse: to remove thoughts from their original contexts in order to liberate them. The aim was something like “unlimited semiosis,” the ability of any thought to form a copula/predication with any other thought. Like the ancient tradition of carnival, where disguise promoted the copulation between the lower with the upper classes in order to strengthen genetic pools that would otherwise become sterile through endogamy, the zairja’s aim

THE WORKSHOP AS “ZAIRJA”

The metalepsis workshop pursues themes generated by participants and accelerates conversation using film clips. In the case of the Mediated Cities Conference the leitmotifs of McLuhan’s thermodynamics and the visibility of the city within the memory of film open way to the two ideas of the double frame, the “nose” intruding from the space of production into the space of representation, and the “matrix” whose multiple senses (womb, woman, original site) lay the ground for discovering “sites of exception” within the cityscape/mediascape of Los Angeles. 9

Metalepsis is a framing/sheltering operation, evident in distinctive ways in literature and other arts. Its logic, however, belongs to the Psyche, in the largest sense of the word, which originally designated the soul. The soul we envisage as the ultimate and original of a device that was known by the Eleventh Century to Arabic, Lurianic, and Christian mystics, the zairja. This was primarily a diagrammatic schema, a matrix involving astrological and astronomical data as well as geometric devices taken from the arts of memory. The zairja was a computer — the first computer in fact — but the point of the zairja was not to make muddy thoughts clear but, rather, the reverse: to remove thoughts from their original contexts in order to liberate them. The aim was something like “unlimited semiosis,” the ability of any thought to form a copula/predication with any other thought. Like the ancient tradition of carnival, where disguise promoted the copulation between the lower with the upper classes in order to strengthen genetic pools that would otherwise become sterile through endogamy, the zairja’s aim
was to disguise thoughts with its own version of a full-body domino. Lawrence Durrell: “One feels free in this disguise to do whatever one likes without prohibition. You cannot tell whether you are dancing with a man or a woman. The dark tides of Eros, which demand full secrecy if they are to overflow the human soul, burst out during carnival.”

The freedom of unlimited semiosis is the freedom of subjectivity in a psychoanalytical sense. Psychoanalysis can address the symptom, the use of the body by the unconscious to create demi-signs to “signalize” emotional events to the consciousness. Once the interpretive task has been accomplished, psychoanalysis concludes. Lacan specified, however, a coda to psychoanalysis, a project lying beyond its interpretive reach. This was the search for the sinthome, the ancient French way of writing symptom and also a more comprehensive idea. While the symptom is based on the unknowability of desire, jouissance, the sinthome is about the recovery and repair of the Psyche that has been broken by desire. Lacan imagined subjectivity in terms of three regional functions, the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real. Represented as rings of a Borromeo knot, they linked with a Möbius-band logic, each ring lying on top of the previous ring, with the “last” ring unaccountably slipping beneath the “first” (“first” and “last” cannot be specifically located in the knot; like the Möbius-band, there is no specific place where one can locate a specific “twist”).

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\text{Figure 2. The sinthome as a fourth ring “repairing” the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real relations}
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The sinthome works like a fourth ring. When the subjective system breaks, the Borromeo knot cannot achieve its topological bond. The sinthome is a small ring that repairs the break between the Symbolic and its adjacent rings, the Imaginary and the Real. This healing act can be modeled through metalepsis through one of three primary apothecaries:

- The critical system of Harold Bloom, elaborated in his famous early work, *Anxiety of Influence* (1973). Here, the break occurring within subjectivity takes place with the invasion of Eros as “daemon,” mirrored in the response of retreat, *askesis*. The horizon/frame mediating this invasion/retreat can be viewed from four angles: *tessera* (the coded fragment), *clinamen* (the exception, the swerve), *kenosis* (knowing without knowing), and *apophrades* (the voice and return of the dead). Because each term has an extensive anthropological as well as poetic history, this is a primary and nearly unlimited resource for studying the sinthome.

- Films that use metalepsis also tend to be about *sinthomatic* situations: death dreams (*Sunset Boulevard, Mulholland Drive*), asynchrony (*Memento, Pulp Fiction*), and “detached virtuality” (*The Wizard of Oz, Lost Horizon*), where the Borgesian themes of the double, travel through time, the story in the story, and contamination of reality by the dream dominate.

- “Psychotheology,” a term coined by Eric Santner, covers a third and liminal zone of the sinthome, the limits of love and language developed by artists such as James Joyce, Marcel Proust, and Raymond Roussel (the list is extensive). In architecture as well as poetry, this is the zone of the epiphany, the “site of exception,” the miracle. This third and most difficult of resources cannot be neatly encoded within the metalepsis workshop because its methods as well as its contents correspond
to the function of “emergence,” where no predictable link can be found between antecedent conditions and outcomes. Indeed, the ideas of antecedent and result, cause and effect, beginning and end dissolve within this category of unlimited semiosis. One could say that where Bloom’s system and filmic examples constitute mirror images of each other (one structural, the other anarchic), psychotheology opens the way to Eros as a “pure void,” the mediatrix as such. Here, we move from analogy to anagogy, a move that can be accommodated only as an unplanned act — wonderful in experience but not something that can be predicted or easily described. The most that can be said is that the mediatrix requires “readiness,” an open attitude that “faces future.” The possibility of this is the motivation for having a workshop in the first place, in contrast to the usual one-way scholarly presentation.

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1 We develop this reversal through the idea of “reversed predication,” a reversal of the polarity of conventional causal-temporal direction, generalized as “predication.” Like the flip of figure and ground, consciousness has unwittingly laid the ground for this reversal, and the experience is akin to a déjà vu merger of imagination and memory. See Donald Kunze, “Metalepsis of the Site of Exception,” in Architecture against the Post-Political, ed. Nadir Lahiji (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014), 124–148.


3 Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: McGraw Hill: 1964), 22–32. “A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in ‘high definition’…. Telephone is a cool medium, or one of low definition, because the ear is given a meager amount of information” (22–23). The heat of a medium requires an equal and opposite input from the user-audience. Hot media require little participation, while “cool media are high in participation and completion by the audience” (23).


7 Where place, divine word from a supernatural source, and the uncanny are involved, the term apophrades, borrowed from Harold Bloom’s well-known Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry (New York, Oxford University Press, 1973). Bloom’s five paired terms (clinament tessera, kenosis/apophrades, and demon/askesis) can be shown also to relate to the sympathetic pairing of place and pregnancy, origins and sheltering as uncanny. We argue that metalepsis and its complementary term, catalepsis, are the only critical means to move forward with any one of these component ideas while retaining the rich associations of related meanings and traditions.


THE IN-BETWEEN-STATE

DAVID LEE
PARSONS THE NEW SCHOOL FOR DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

This paper argues that architecture and urban design’s adherence to the manipulation of physical structures as their sole means for creating holistic environments renders their practices ineffective. Contemporary life no longer exists only in a physical state. New technologies—smart phones, smart glasses, high-speed transports—have given birth to a new virtual world for people to live within. As this paper recognizes that these technologies offer the potential for new shared democratic environments, it argues that the current implementation of these technologies has fragmented contemporary life into discrete pockets of activity. As there is not yet an understanding of how the physical and virtual should relate, this paper offers a comparative analysis of the relationships between architects, inhabitants and their environments in physical and virtual worlds.

Analysis will reveal that the problematic division of experiences stems from a larger misconception of what architecture and urban design should do: namely, that environments should determine people’s behavior. It argues for a new value system where environments are not measured by their determining of behavior, but rather, their ability to spawn new behaviors and social forms—environments which are equally authored by designers and inhabitants.

Lastly, this paper will demonstrate that the creation of such environments requires contemporary life to advance to the “In-Between-State”—a state where environments are experienced simultaneously physically and virtually. The In-Between-State will enable contemporary cities to be authored by all its citizens, necessitating exploration of social values, democracy, and social evolution.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND DEFINITIONS

This investigation is based on a theoretical understanding of form, authorship, and behavior. A “form” is the set of rules that orders the behavior of a material construct, both inanimate and animate. All forms are realized through material constructs and any material construct is merely a realization of its form (see figure 1). A form may be realized through the material constructs of another—a material construct may be ordered by a primary form and an additional secondary form (see figure 2). “Authorship” is the varied ability to have a form materialize perfectly. It is measured by the degree of similarity between a form and its material construct(s) (see figure 3). Just as there are primary and secondary forms, there are primary and secondary authors—a realized form may be the product of multiple authors (see figure 2). Given the site of investigation (the relationship between people and their contemporary urban environments), behavior is spatialized by its division into separate “activities” (see figure 4). Each activity is a group of actions, which support a common end. All activities have a beginning and an end; they are located in time and space; they are destinations that are traveled to and from (see figure 5). In this regard, the activity may be considered a basic unit of realized form. Authorship at a larger scale is determined by the ability to include desirable activities and exclude undesirable activities (see figure 6). The distances separating activities and how they are traversed greatly impacts larger behavior.
THE MEDIATED CITY CONFERENCE
Architecture_MPS; Ravensbourne; Woodbury University
Los Angeles:

Figure 2.

Figure 3.

Figure 4. Behavior is divided into separate activities.

Figure 6. Large-scale authorship over behavior is the ability to include desirable activities and exclude undesirable activities.
ANALYSIS OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

Form in the Physical World

Nature orders everything in the physical world. This applies to both inanimate and animate beings. For example, a pig—an animate being—does not decide how it should behave or, even, if it should exist. Its behavior is not for any purpose beyond survival—beyond the rules established by nature. The forms of a pig and nature are one in same. However, the form of a person is distinct from nature. Unlike a pig, a person has consciousness; that is, the capacity to choose to exist. Where a pig behaves only according to the rules of survival, a person behaves according to an additional set of rules that are unrelated—and often contradictory to—his or her own corporeal well-being. Nature alone does not constitute a person. For example, when a person eats, he or she does not do so purely to survive. Instead, a person eats in a manner that supports his or her form, which may dictate eating certain foods in certain a manner or even fasting for several days.

In the physical world, a person is only a secondary author of his or her physically realized form. A person’s form is materialized through the manipulation of physical constructs which are firstly ordered by—and bound to—the rules of nature (see figure 7). A person alters the behavior of his or her own body (an animate construct) and inanimate constructs—such as stone—to create things such as architecture (see figure 8). The inherent discrepancy between a person’s form and its physical realization perpetuates variation. This stimulates evolution of form at individual and multiple levels—the erratic behavior of one construct causes multiple constructs to interact in unintended ways (see figures 9 and 10).
Thus, in a foreign platform (such as the physical world to the form of a person), all secondary authored constructs aid in the realization of their forms through their own behavior and by supporting the behavior of fellow constructs—this occurs either directly at a singular level or indirectly by forming a network with other constructs that form larger environments. In the physical world, a construct a person creates (e.g. a pew) aids in the realization of his or her form by retaining its physical shape, supporting that person’s corporeal behavior (e.g. praying), and furthermore networking to other constructs to form a larger environment (e.g. a church).

The gap between a person and nature is perhaps the earliest and most fundamental motive for a person to create an environment which alleviates the struggles of survival and supports his or her form. The act of making one’s environment is as essential to the realization and production of a one’s form as is having freedom to control one’s own corporeal behavior.
The Form of People

The relationships discussed thus far are further complicated by the fact that there is not one form that governs the behavior of all people—every person follows his or her own set of behavioral rules and beliefs. The form of one person may be very similar or very different from another’s. Thus, inanimate constructs—and the environments they form—that supports the behavior and form of one person may contradict and limit the behaviors and forms of other people.

Competition Between Form and Shared Authorship in the Physical World

The primary objective of the architect is to create environments that necessitate the coexistence and fair interaction of many different realized forms, stimulating their evolution. Although such places in the physical world appear common (the public plaza is a chief example), environments that host a variety of behaviors can only exist within a common and foreign platform.

For a theoretical example, form “A” and form “B” cannot coexist equally in a shared space if either one is fully realized (see figure 11). Only by their partial realization where their constructs first follow a foreign form (form “C”) can form A and form B coexist and interact in a productive manner (see figure 12). In such a platform, authorship over all constructs can be shared as neither form A or form B has primary authorship. The more equally foreign form C is to form A and form B, the more democratic of a platform it is.

Shared authorship happens in two ways. In the first case, form A is realized through a reductive process where the construct of form B (construct C^B) is stripped to its primary form (form C) and used only as primary material (see figure 13). An example in the physical world would be recycling plastic water bottles to make create plastic grocery bags. Of the two types of shared authorship, this is the less productive of the two as neither form A or B gain anything from their interaction. However, in the second scenario, construct C^B is used for both its primary and secondary forms. Here, construct C^B acts a launchpad for the evolution of all forms involved and the creation of new constructs (and new forms) not possible with either form A or form B alone (see figure 14).

This means that the inability of architects to fully author physical environments causes different forms associated with different people to materialize and interact within their environments (see figure 15). Though physical architecture may specify certain activities, it only succeeds in providing the possibility for these activities. Rather, inhabitants are free to participate in specified kinds of behavior or deviate from them. People have the physical capacity to rebel against existing social forms and institutions. Consider, for example, food fighting in a cafeteria or protesting in the Financial District of Manhattan. Authorship over physical environments is always shared to some degree.

The evolution of existing forms (and creation of new ones), requires their constructs to materialize within a democratic platform—a platform that is equally distinct in form. Only in such a platform can the material constructs of one form become agents in the materialization and production of others.
Multiple Activities in the Physical World

At the scale of multiple activities across different environments, the gap between form and its physical realization again proves valuable for the interaction of different forms and the production of new ones. Large-scale authorship over a person’s physical behavior raises two complications. First, the undefined nature of any one environmental activity problematizes its qualification as desirable or undesirable before it is ever realized, as individuality disrupts the inclusion of desirable activities and the exclusion of undesirable ones. Second, the rules of the physical world cause all environments to be separated by varying distances, as activities are unequally accessible both to one person and among multiple people (see figures 16 and 17). As such, transitional activities in the physical world—like walking from a restaurant to a movie theater—makeup a significant part of a person’s larger experience. To create a more desirable end or activity, shared transitional constructs are spaces that are equally foreign in form and have the potential to host diverse types of people. As a result, shared transitional constructs, such as sidewalks, streets, and subways, become incubators for new forms (see figures 18 and 19).
ANALYSIS OF VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENTS

Form in the Virtual World

Unlike the physical world, the virtual world begins as an undefined platform—it does not have its own rules or form. As such, virtual space is infinitely malleable, giving a person full authorship over his or her constructs (see figure 20). This enables people to question existing rules of behavior based on the physical world. Moreover, it offers them the opportunity to explore new forms previously unrealizable.

For centuries people have lived solely in the physical world. However, this is no longer the case. New technologies have given birth to digital environments, many of which, function in a highly virtual manner. Common examples range from those used for social networking (such as Google+ and Facebook) and productivity (such as SketchUp and Google Maps) to entertainment purposes (such as Tumblr and World of Warcraft). Virtual life is becoming increasingly accepted and, in certain communities, even more valued than embodied life.

While accessing virtual environments is commonplace, the knowledge required to create virtual environments is not. Consequently, the number of people inhabiting virtual environments far exceeds the number of people authoring them in a primary way—the distinction between architect and inhabitant as primary and secondary authors, respectively, is widened. This greatly impacts how forms of different people are realized, interact, and evolve.

Figure 20. Architects have full authorship over their virtual constructs.
Competition Between Form and Shared Authorship in the Virtual World

In the physical world, a person is bound by the laws of nature, but rarely by the rules of other people. This is not the case in most contemporary virtual environments. As the virtual world does not impose its own form, the behavior rules of any virtual environment are solely defined by the environment’s primary author (see figure 21). Consequently, inhabitants are limited to the activities outlined and are unable to add their own. Virtual environments cannot be re-authored or employed for activities beyond their designed capacity. The material existence of these environments adheres to their conceptual one. Furthermore, because the virtual world is empty, the environments architects create are the only inhabitable places. Architects outline the full spectrum of virtual behavior possible.

Yet, within most virtual environments (e.g. Google+), inhabitants experience a higher level of freedom and control than in the physical world (e.g. in Google+ users can manipulate their content with great ease). However, because users have only secondary authorship, total diversity may be more limited. Variation is high in quantity, but based on a few themes (see figure 21). Compared to the physical world, forms in virtual environments are realized through a more controlled and reductive process. Virtual information and behavior are highly curated by the architect and the user.

Multiple Activities in the Virtual World

At the larger scale of multiple activities across different environments, the reductive nature of virtual authorship is again problematic for the interaction of different forms. People experience a high degree of authorship over larger virtual behavior for two reasons. First, because environments successfully specify their activities (and environments are largely unchanging), a person can easily qualify any activity as desirable or undesirable before it happens. The scripted nature of behavior within a single activity allows predictability (see figure 22). Second, the absence of natural virtual rules causes all virtual environments to be inherently separated by a distance of zero and, therefore, equally accessible to every person. The ability to instantaneously warp to any environment results in the exclusion of transitional and undesirable activities from virtual life—only desirable environments are accessed. Consequently, in the virtual world, people operate in parallel universes and nowhere do truly unrelated forms interact. The virtual world enables every person to be spatially adjacent, but socially estranged by their confinement to predetermined activities they deem desirable.

Figure 21. Virtual activities are qualified as desirable or undesirable before they are ever realized.
CONCLUSION

The Contemporary City

Contemporary cities are becoming increasingly homogeneous in their material makeup and use. Large developments of globally branded architectures and programs dominate many urban centers. Public open spaces are privatized to benefit those with wealth and exclude those without. For example, Union Square in Manhattan—one of the New York City’s most central public spaces—is surrounded by commerce economically inaccessible to those without the financial means, such as Nordstroms, Bestbuy and Starbucks. Moreover, shared transportation systems are abandoned for the sake of individual convenience. For example, the largest public space in New York City—the street—is dedicated almost entirely to the automobile—a private transportation system used only by a fraction of the city’s population.

The current value system for determining the success of contemporary environments stems from the once prevalent need to author the natural environment for survival. Everything that people author in the physical world, at its core, has been, and will continue to be, an attempt to overcome the conflict between their forms and that of nature. Consequently, it has long been the desire of architects and urban designers to fully author their environments and, by extension, the behavior of their inhabitants. Indeed, inhabitants value qualities such as efficiency, predictably and controllability. Thus, while current technologies have opened contemporary urban life to more fluid and democratic possibilities, most contemporary environments are conceived, created and used in static manner. Nevertheless, the greater degree to which an environment controls behavior, the more predetermined and predictable behavior becomes and the easier it is to eliminate undesirable behaviors along with the unknown and new.

Authorship over environments, both physical and virtual, currently requires specific skills and knowledge most do not have—the construction of buildings, sidewalks and streets requires vast amounts of economic wealth and manpower. At the same time, the construction of virtual spaces requires technical expertise typically learned in higher education and access to rapidly changing technologies. Although the physical world ensures a certain level of shared authorship and the virtual world enables content to be created, duplicated, and manipulated instantly, most people are unable to directly author the places they inhabit. The majority of physical and virtual environments today are authored by a select few, making them largely preventative and undemocratic. By contrast, a more engaging city needed with the most inclusionary and open spaces imaginable. These spaces must host the highest number and variety of people and demand their expression through ordering the environment itself. To achieve this goal, the city must be questioned, critiqued and authored by all of its people.

The-Inbetween-State

The solution does not lie in the virtual world or the physical, but in a platform that integrates both, what I call the In-Between-State (see figure 24). The In-Between-State will allow a place such as Times Square to be re-made instantaneously by the collective. Its fundamental meaning and purpose could be continuously questioned through a shared and interactive experience. New social behaviors, which deviate
from existing social forms such as protests, parties and the unidentified, will be evaluated within a dynamic public and may spawn their own communities and full societies.

The In-Between-State could be realized through technology manifested not as a physical device (phones, glasses or watches), but as part of the city itself. Free and accessible technology must be embedded within the city’s basic infrastructures (streets, sidewalks and parks) to provide unprejudiced access to a greater public for every person all the time. Virtual constructs will be disseminated through physical constructs and melded together. This information, which now is the city, would be gathered and displayed, through everyone’s augmented physical behavior. The current physical environment would be left largely untouched as the city advances to a living repository—an egalitarian platform for new social activity. In the In-Between-State, the form and experience of the city will be forever multiple and open—necessitating the exploration of social values and democracy and the invention of new social forms. The In-Between-State will be the catalyst for the perpetual redefinition of the contemporary city and its people towards the fantastic and unknown.

Figure 24. The-Inbetween-State
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URBAN UTOPICS AND THE NEW DIGITAL VIEW

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INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of images in the contemporary information economy poses a unique problem for civic authorities whose job it is to control the image of the city. The politics underwriting both representational democracy and capitalism make it tactically difficult and economically inefficient to police image production. This means Foucault’s model of a “vigilant architecture” has less traction than Georges Bataille’s “convex, frontal, extrovert” architecture. (Hollier 1989, X (10)) As such, any control of the city image requires a persuasive manipulation of digital imaging technologies. In this respect, the promotional Internet Protocol (IP) webcam image is one significant example of how the digital technologies of image production and dissemination mediate power and influence.

The institutional use of the promotional IP webcam instigates a distinctive urban condition. While Washington’s L’Enfant Plan is one of the most complete examples of an extroverted axial urbanism, its potency is based on the corporeal presence of the architecture and not its imageability. Any subsequent image is subservient to this logic; the image is a formal after-effect. In contrast, the webcam functions through a second disembodied digital aerial viewpoint. The digital technologies underpinning this view establish an image-based formal logic that sits outside established urban theories.

The unique questions raised by the webcam are as much a representational issue as they are formal; meaning their politics are best understood by interrogating how these images say what they say. The issue of image and representation makes Louis Marin’s (1984, 201-232) exploration of the mediation of power through select city maps or portraits particularly relevant. Notably, Marin’s comparative analysis of El Greco’s 1609 ‘Painting of Toledo’ with Merian’s 1615 and Gomboust’s 1647 Paris maps reveal how different representational forms reveal the authority sitting behind these ‘portraits’. Marin’s distinction between narrative and descriptive images is a useful scaffold by which to understand who is the idealised subject of the aerial ‘utopic’ city view. In respect to the IP webcam, any understanding of this subject cannot be divorced from the technological basis by which the digital image mediates form. Furthermore, Marin’s analysis helps frame how any disruption to the image alters the politic operation of these emblematic, descriptive images.

THE TECHNOLOGICAL LIMITS OF HUMAN AGENCY

For a discipline heavily indebted to images, architecture is deeply suspicious of the semiotic reading of form and generally disdainful of the crass commercialization of its objects. The belief is that the plan, paraline, diagram and perspective furnish more authentic images because they index form before they seduce the viewer. The lineage of this belief is lost in the discursive ruptures separating Brunelleschi’s ‘invention’ of perspective, Adolf Loo’s criminalization of ornate figures, Debord’s ‘society of the spectacle’ and the semiotic excessiveness of every postmodern architect. What can be said is that this murky history has pathologised any form that has been figured “to a prior imaging.” (Corner 1999,
153) Yet this rejection of the image as being procedurally and intellectually bankrupt comes at a cost. The retreat to the drawing ignores the politics of the image, which many argue is the base currency of the information economy. (Lyon 2002) The believed authenticity of architecture’s established representational modes also denies the propagandizing potency of all images. The net result is that the discipline fails to question any of the images it denies or supports.

There are only a handful of architects and urbanists willing to accept the dictates of the information economy. For prominent Australian architect Carey Lyon (2002), the marketed image operates literally as a formal template. This approach aims to impart truth to the marketed image, effectively making it deliver on the promise made by the image. Anna Klingmann (2007, 3) instead sees branding as a way to provide “an authentic identity for people and places.” Like Lyon, the problem for Klingmann is not the economic functioning of the system that constructs brands, but rather that design fails to offer local communities brands and images that accord to their own ‘authentic’ image. Klingmann’s argument runs an interesting parallel to Kenneth Frampton’s taming of modernism through regional specificity.

In any case for both Lyon and Klingmann, authenticity is established through attaining formal fidelity between image and object. James Corner (1999, 158) summaries the problem with this approach when arguing that imaged-based scenography “retard[s]…authentic public life” by not “confronting the problems of contemporary life.” Furthermore, any capacity of branded architecture to form “an interactive consumer experience” does not convincingly address Klingmann’s (2007, 8 & 4) own critique that contemporary architecture and urbanism “simultaneously represent and support the ideology of capitalism.” In any case, Klingmann and Carey have no ambition to modify architecture’s established representational forms or contest the economic basis of the information economy.

It is clear that Corner’s (1999, 158) essay ‘Eidetic Operations and New Landscapes’ agrees with the common criticism that postmodern signification reduces built form “to simply expressing or commenting on…[the human] condition.” While Corner is concerned with the problems scenography poses for landscape architecture, his differentiation between the picture and the image nevertheless returns political agency back into the act of drawing. Corner explains that his essay is a broad survey of alternative drawing practices.

Without doubt, Corner’s position makes sense. It is after all impossible after Robin Evans’ (1997) essay ‘Translation from Drawing to Architecture’ to disregard the effect of the drawing on form. Yet Evans also acknowledges that the act of translation inevitably privileges things of interest to the author. Corner’s faith in an eidetic imagining does not necessarily enable a strategic engagement with the politics behind the image. This is not simply a problem that every drawing involves a selective and reductive extraction of information. The capacity of a drawing to be instrumental and representational does not alone mean it is devoid of ideological projection. True agency is not guaranteed simply “by framing the issues differently”. (Corner 1999, 165) In the end, Corner wants drawings that are interpretively open and yet instrumentally authored. The belief that the eidetic drawing has a positive outcome only idealizes the drawing space as a site of authentic action. What this means is that the drawing is the site where meaning is projected into the world.

Corner’s faith in the drawing reinforces the belief of anthropomorphic control over the technologies of production. Yet, architecture’s societal agency cannot simply be seen as the construction of effective mediated images. As Friedrich Kittler and Matthew Griffin (1996, 721) write in ‘The City is a
Medium’, "no system...is self-governing." By extension, the internal machinations of contemporary ‘technology’ operate without any interest in humanity. In a counter to Heidegger’s (1977, 302) humanism, the ‘enframing’ capacity of modern technology always disciplines humanity and not the other way around. If the city itself is outside its own control then one must discard, absolutely, any capacity for anthropomorphic control.

Herein, lies the fundamental weakness in Lyon’s, Klingmann’s and Corner’s approach to meaningful images. Lyon and Klingmann over invest in the message rather than the medium, while Corner over invests in a medium that is divorced from those technologies that shape the city. If, after Marshall McLuhan’s (1995, 7) oft repeated mantra “the medium is the message”, Kittler’s radical post-humanism ensures that our relationship to technology is, at best, parasitic. Kittler’s radical reframing of McLuhan suggests that the politics of the city image constructs a city that is neither an assemblage of meaningful objects nor a product of authentic disciplinary drawings. Instead, agency involves an opportunistic manipulation of the mediating technologies that construct the city portrait. Here, action involves intervening in the material and immaterial systems operating across the “complex knot of networks...[that] surpass the planning ability of the engineers”. (Kittler 1996, 721) This ensures the exploitation of the system is less a question of controlled effect but of indirect and somewhat unknowable affects.

**NEW TECHNIQUES OF DISRUPTION**

In the chapter ‘The City’s Portrait in its Utopics’, Louis Marin (1984, 202) argues that the descriptive image is that it “must totally reveal its object.” Developed “against the grain of narrative”, description must conceal “its successive nature and present it as a redundant repetition, as if all were present at the same time.” (Marin 1984, 202) Under this definition the promotional city image fashioned through IP webcam systems procures purely emblematic, descriptive images. Obviously, there are parallels between Merian and Gomboust’s Paris maps and the IP webcam view. The most notable being that both are situated in a ‘utopic’, nowhere space. While the ability to zoom and scan the view modifies the capacity of the image, this operability does not alter the fact that the image’s visual hierarchy is centered on iconic elements that are meant to ‘stand for’ the experience of the whole city. In this scenario, political agency becomes linked to challenging the ‘utopic’ subjects of the aerial city view through disrupting the image’s technical means of production.

The real differences between the IP webcam view and Merian and Gomboust’s city portraits rise from the type of image and its mode of production. Importantly, these differences reveal different ‘utopic’ subjects. As Marin’s (1984, 215 & 226) diagrams illustrate, the combination of narrative and descriptive images and text reveal Merian’s subject to be the city itself, while for Gomboust it is the King’s Palace. The subject of the promotional webcam differs because it is first and foremost a descriptive image. The emblematic quality of the IP webcam view clearly provides a portrait of the city that speaks directly to the image’s civic sponsors. However, the facility to pan and zoom allows the virtual tourists to project their own narrative journeys into the captured site. Unlike the Paris maps, where separate narrative and descriptive images work together, the camera’s operability collapses narrative into descriptive form. This important difference extends its ‘utopic’ subject to include both the civic authorities and the virtual tourist.
The second significant point of difference between the IP webcam image and Merian’s and Gomboust’s Paris maps lies with their means of production. Like the Nolli Map, the expense in producing Merian’s and Gomboust’s maps guaranteed they were intended for a limited audience. In contrast, the digital image is highly reproducible and easily disseminated. The *affordability* of the image is important because it foregrounds the pixel’s capacity to layer and process highly specific qualitative data. The pixel, as the base unit of the contemporary image, ensures that color and contrast become the primary compositional and elements of image making. The trick of the pixel is that it appears to present the world according to the projective geometry of linear perspective. However, the discrete packaging of visual data in the pixel means that lines exist only when aligned pixels share the same color and contrast. As Klette and Rosenfeld (2004, 15) illustrate, lines do not actually exist because, geometrically, there is no common connecting or intersecting pixel. In the digital image, spatial depth is determined through color and contrast shifts rather than by a set of lines receding to a shared vanishing point on the horizon.

The hardware and software governing the digital re-presentation of color and contrast involve numerous interpretative steps. The primary aim of these procedures is the same: to deliver a smooth, moving image that establishes a visual hierarchy in the image. (Cantoni 2011, 12) In the IP webcam ‘pipeline’ there are three important technologies that facilitate the curatorial procedures of color composition, image hierarchy and the removal of visual anomalies. The first technology is the Color Filter Array (CFA) that, located directly above the pixel sensors, identifies the color in each pixel according to the additive RGB model of color mixing. It is worth noting that this means these sub-pixel sensor patterns always limit the re-presentation of color to the RGB spectrum. The second technology is an algorithmic process where a ‘scan order’ pattern selects and privileges image content. In this system, color and contrast are determined by the order in which the CFA pattern is read. The third technology is another algorithm that attempts to remove visual anomalies, with diffraction being the most persistent anomaly camera manufacturers wish to avoid.

All these technologies aim to provide the best possible likeness of the real. This sentiment is demonstrated by Rastislav Lukac et al (2005) when discussing the value of different CFA arrangements. Importantly, the organization and distribution of the pixel within the CFA aims to provide the highest level of image color optimization for camera hardware producers. The desire for image synthesis results in the use of interpolation algorithms that ‘guess’ absent or incongruent data. (Poynton 2012, 347) At the same time, camera manufacturers are reliant on a small number of third party proprietors to develop the performative standards governing how these systems re-present the real. As with the dictates of the RGB spectrum, these industry standards establish a set of hidden aesthetic assumptions about what constitutes a good image.

In noting the thinness of research into the industry standards governing different CFA patterns, Lukac et al (2005, 1260) actually argue that color curation advances particular proprietary interests. What is interesting is that each of the sub-sampling filtering procedures mentioned erases the very presence of the technology itself. The problem with the image processing ‘pipeline’ is that each system conceals the proprietary interests and embeds these within each city image. These are highly orchestrated visual experiences of the city, where the politics of the view digitally manipulate the primary compositional and structural elements to ‘cleanse’ the view of disruptive visual effects. The desire to maintain the integrity of the promotional city image ensures that disruptive phenomena are minimized across the webcam network despite the fact they register both the presence of a mediating technology and the activity of the city. Clearly, the pixel marks the divergence between traditional and contemporary...
image-making procedures. However, it is just as evident that the digital mediation of architectural and urban form locates these proprietorial authors as a third, hidden, ‘utopic’ subject of the IP webcam view.

Tests\(^1\) reveal that the application of the CFA, scan order and diffraction patterns, at the vastly increased scale of a material façade arrangement, directly interferes with the internal processing functions of the camera. In such scenarios, the architect can draw upon the geometry of diverse pixel arrangements on the viewed surface to predictively override and control the reception of the urban context over the Internet. By extension, the duplication of these micro-geometric patterns disrupts the politics of the privileged ‘utopic’ subject but disrupting the view. Depending on the technical protocols, these built surfaces can initiate such effects either by repeating or varying these patterns. Notably, the success of these formal interventions is intrinsically linked to the webcam’s pan and zoom function. In an odd inversion of time-motion studies, knowledge is gained through the movement of a recording tool rather than the body. In the case of the CFA pattern, variations to the ‘tried-and-tested’ proprietary patterns, such as the Bayer Filter Array, can allow the designer to modify the color and luminosity of the image. Such variations can be achieved by applying non-traditional red, blue and green patterns to a facade. The benefit of this approach to building design being that the designer can recalibrate the color rendering of the site and even alter the visual hierarchy of the image. (Figure 1) Alternative disruptive effects can be obtained by transposing rescaled scan order sequences or diffraction patterns as façade fenestration patterns. For example, variations in scan order pattern

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\(^1\) This work forms part of the ongoing research of a PhD thesis currently being undertaken by one of the authors of this paper.
type and orientation results in pronounced disruptions to the image as the camera zooms in and out. (Figure 2) The digital image is as equally disrupted by transposing the Fraunhofer, or far-field, diffraction pattern onto a façade. Acting in conjunction with the moving camera, the use of this pattern reverses the camera’s capacity to read the same surface pattern when captured by the camera in its non-diffracted form. (Figure 3)

![Figure 2. Video montage of a scale model of a horizontal scan order pattern, showing the camera's repeated unsuccessful attempts to resolve the focus of the image.](image1)

![Figure 3. Two Fraunhofer diffraction patterns (left) transposed into hypothetical building façade diffraction gratings (right)](image2)

**CONCLUSION**

As Marin shows, the visual conceit in the early cartographic representations of the city reveals deeper ideological intensions. For Marin (1984, 230), the beauty of El Greco’s portrait of ‘Toledo’ is that its visual axis effectively “figures the deconstruction of the representation”. El Greco’s genius was to disrupt the functioning of the narrative and descriptive image-forms in the painting. Marin sees this as
an opening up of a representational discrepancy, exposing the difference between the real and the represented. In fact, El Greco’s portrait of Toledo “shows the shift and spacing between the map and the landscape…[and] signifies the substitution between the orders of painting and nature. (Marin 1984, 231) Of course, the city portraits discussed by Marin are in a sense fixed images. They can only be critiqued. The dilemma with the promotional use of IP webcam image is that the politics of persuasion requires content to be released back into the world. The inherent openness of this webcam content means these images can be contested. In questioning the structure of the sanctioned city image, action is now extended to hijacking the predetermined viewing hierarchies of the image.

While there are three ‘utopic’ subjects of the IP webcam view, the image left uncontested means the civic authorities and proprietors of image technology are the true purveyors of the city image. The exploitation of the qualitative properties of pixel arrangement and connectivity rejects the politics of promotion and concealment. The technical disruption of the image tips the balance back towards the viewer without resorting to redemptive messages associated with the branded image or eidetic drawing. Rather, the disruptive image contests the stultifying effects of the urban spectacle, or what Marin (1984, 230) would refer to as, ‘the neutralizing work of utopic practice within the representation of the city’. The ensuing co-opting of the digital image opens up a new type of space between sign and signified. In the process, intervening in the material and immaterial systems of the city asks architecture and urbanism to redraw its own disciplinary boundaries.

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EVOLVING LANDSCAPES AND CHANGING ARCHITECTURES IN MODERN JAPANESE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

The aim of this short paper is to introduce some open-ended considerations on the process of formation and evolution of the modern Japanese urban landscape in the second half of the 20th century, a process that unfolded since the end of the WWII and heavily relied on the outcomes of the economic growth and social mutation based on the technological innovation and infrastructural development.

The peculiar and distinctive urban landscape of modern Japanese cities resulted by the combination of innovation of foreign origins and also by the re-interpretation of some elements of the local culture and aesthetic tradition. The extreme fragmentation and the patchwork like nature of the urban tissue of most of the Japanese cites is linked to the frantic pace of changes and the overlapping of eclectic forms, dense functions and mixed activities which combine and integrate with the use of a new aesthetic language based on the acceptance of the power of change of the latest technologies.

Legacy of the war

After the end of the WWII Japan was defeated and for a while an acute sense of tragedy, humiliation and frustration became the distinctive notes in the society and was present at all levels of the culture. The atomic disaster, the collapse of the economy and the destruction of the old cites left the Japanese in a state of torpor. In a few years the situation was about to change: the threats and opportunities brought by the Korea War in the context of the larger Cold War exerted a great influence on the development of Japan in terms of economic growth, cultural revival and design vitality and innovation for the following 2-3 decades. Industrial renovation and economic expansion became the engines which prompted a grandiose process of urbanization which enacted a progressive mutation of the society and its lifestyle. The economic miracle of Japan during the rapid economic growth which began in the late 1950s was essentially set on the interrelationship of industrial capitalism, aesthetic and technology which primarily influenced the formation of a consumerist society and the progressive transformation (or adaptation) of the traditional values, social and personal needs, and eventually of the physical form of the cites.  

The golden age of Showa Japan, named after the emperor Showa (1926-1989), coincided with the economic expansion of the nation in these years, and the formation of the middle class was driven by the surge of salarymen (salaried worker). The policy of the government aimed at encouraging the consumption led to the fast expansion of the Japanese middle class which prompted the spread of a new urban lifestyle which rapidly wiped out the traditional frugal living of the past and instead was more and
more directly attracted by the comforts inspired by western models of life and consumerism\textsuperscript{ii}. The JHC - Japan Housing Corporation, a governmental body set up in order to resolve the housing shortage and to design and prepare schemes to improve the housing condition of the citizens, was engaged in a titanic effort to satisfy the pressing demands for new shelters with more adequate living condition for the urban workers. New mass housing complexes were built and new towns were planned to balance the population growth and sustain the economic growth. Indeed the investments in the development of modern infrastructures had the priority, and this resulted in a general lack of attention for the design of urban amenities and for the achieving of basic standards in the housing sector, a problem which coupled with a progressive erosion of the environmental quality and the spread of serious cases of pollution and diseases, with the consequent degradation of most of the urban areas in the Japanese industrial cities.

The radical transformation of the Japanese cites to foster the industrial development and promote the national re-birth through economic success meant the massive alteration of coastlines, the urban renewal of the traditional districts, with the consequent loss of historic heritage and the construction on site of high-density urban enclaves mean the development of new strategies, technologies and techniques for the creation of a new form of city with a very peculiar image and new functions for a modern society.

Technology became a source of inspiration for the design of a new urban landscape and a new form of city, which was directly linked to the frantic transformation of the structure of the postwar Japanese city. The large scale of the phenomena of urbanization, population growth, economic development and industrial and scientific progress of those years had the most powerful sponsor in the projects of Kenzo Tange and especially of Metabolism, a group of architects and designers who expressed the optimism in the future and their proposal for a new image of the city in a mass and technological society through a series of bold and very influential utopian projects.\textsuperscript{iii}

The success of Metabolism, which draw attention from the international audience of architects and planners, and gained the support of the economic and cultural elites in homeland, owed much to the response to the crisis of Modern Movement’s concepts and methods and to the specific problems of overcrowded and uncontrolled expansion of the Japanese cities; especially important was the Metabolism stance in defining and proposing a new model of mass-housing prototypes and the creation of a new totally artificial model of city which was expressly proposed for a forthcoming society of the future, built of some traditional values of the Japanese civilization such as the concept of impermanence and adaptation to the possibilities offered by the technological innovation. The low cost houses built with prefabricated system of production and made of wooden and rice paper proposed in the late 1940s-early 1950s by architect Kyoshi Ikebe, an economical way to provide new houses for the large masses in and outside the cites, became the model for the new Metabolists capsules proposed in the early 1960s, now built in steel and plastic and intended to be plugged-in to high-rise towers in futuristic cities in the air and on the sea, as expression of a new genuine contribution of Japan to the research of new way of imagining the city and the urban life in the Atomic Age; but especially the proposals of Metabolism became a stage which allowed the most sensible and advanced professionals to create an alternative and more fascinating image of the city of the future in opposition to the reality of the concrete Japanese city, where industrial plants and manufacturing factories became the dominant elements of the townscape contributing to the generation of a dreadful urban environment less and less suitable for the life of the emergent middle class.
Transportation and the formation of a new urban environment

Among the factors that mostly contributed to the reshaping of the Japanese urban environment during the aftermath of the Pacific War and at the end of the second half of the 20th century were the modernization and expansion of the industrial system and the development of an efficient and very well interconnected and extensive public transportation network; indeed is the latter the resulted in the acceleration of the urban growth of the pre-existent urban areas and their continuous development which often resulted in forms of sprawl. Since the modernization of Japan in the Meiji era and especially at the beginning of last century the railway led the restructuring of the hierarchy of the Japanese cities in adjusting to the necessity to be part of the main rail network, and their internal urban structure.

The excessive cost of plans of expansion of roads inside the congested cites proved a major incentive for transportation companies to look at the areas on the urban outskirts for future growth. The competition among several private rail companies (trams and then subway and metro) and the expansion of their networks from the core to the suburban areas of the cities, where most of the new residential areas were built on cheap land to house the growing working class that fled the countryside and rural districts to work in the urban factories, resulted in the relieve of the congestion of the central districts and in the effective urban explosion of all the main industrial cities in Japan. The new transportation networks and especially the presence of new railway and metro stations had a decisive impact on the morphology and general master planning of the pre-existent city especially in the central core, where 2 nuclei of commercial areas began to compete to attract customers and activities: the traditional market of the city, located usually in the central district of the city, had to face the power of attraction of a new commercial zone generated by the presence of the railway stations mostly built on the outskirt of the old business centers, where the land was cheaper. The continuous and regular flow of commuters and the progressive growth of several additional shops, services and markets, quite often sponsored by the same transportation companies,
created a new commercial district in the Japanese city which, by increasing the density of mixed functions, eventually was integrated to the urban center and became effective part of the whole urban structure.\textsuperscript{iv}

The case of Tokyo is exemplary of this process of urban growth driven by the expansion and integration of the transportation development. As the capital of the Country and most important political and industrial and economic center of the nation, the transformation of Tokyo into a model of megacity whose urban landscape extends at regional scale, the need of an efficient, capillary and very extensive transportation network is vital for the daily activities of her inhabitants, who commute long hours from suburban residential districts to central working areas. The city is a clear example of what has been termed “railway urbanism”, a process of urban organization which disregard cars as main means of movement and, heralding the modern T.O.D. design approach and planning methodology, conceiving the city as a hierarchical network of mass transport pathways (expressways, metro, railway lines) which intersect in sub-node-points always connected to major nodes of services and movement (major railways and subway stations). The easy access of commuters and the special linkages between private railways/metro companies and commercial and market groups has created an urban landscape where the location of the main chains of department stores and shopping malls is essentially close or literally built around huge decks/plazas in front or above subway and railway stations or interchange stations, which are truly fundamental urban nodes thanks to their efficiency and reliance of the citizens on public transportation.

Indeed a peculiar aspect of urbanization of modern Japanese cities is the role of railways stations, which are not only terminals and interchange points for mass transit lines (bus, subways, metro) but also (and primarily) providers of additional services such as commercial spaces, entertainment and cultural areas, relaxation spots. Through the enhancement of the integration with the surrounding urban areas and by maximizing the walkability for pedestrians by rising the railway tracks and platforms above ground, these are very much the containers of essential daily activities of the mass of commuters moving from the suburban dormitories to the urban cores of large conurbations (around 30% of people in Japan use regularly the railway for transportation, compared to 8% in Germany and just 1% in USA).\textsuperscript{v}

The necessity to rely entirely on the efficiency of mass transport system in terms of movement and services has inevitable consequences on the development of a very peculiar urban landscape and lifestyle in a high-density city like Tokyo and other Japanese cities. Geographer Yasuo Masai, who has well understand the reality of the “megapolitan” or regional scale of contemporary Tokyo, describes her as a huge railroad city whose residents have no choice that to live near the stations\textsuperscript{vi}, and architect Toyo Ito, who also has perceived movement and the constant exposure to different spaces and places as an intrinsic quality of the current urban life of the contemporary city, considers the present day city dwellers as a sort of artificial habitat for “urban nomads”\textsuperscript{vii}, who commute influencing the “urban daily rhythm” (according to which the population in the central districts decreases sharply in the evening) and enjoy a constantly mutating urban milieu made of kaleidoscopic multifunctional spaces, fascinating consumerism areas and hybrid and eclectic public scenes. Indeed change, impermanence and technological efficiency seem to dominate the physical spaces of the Japanese urban landscape and daily life of its people.
The Japanese city as city vital and collage of artificial realities

When it comes to the urban image and architectures of the city, it is generally assumed that the Japanese have an attitude to rebuilding instead of preserving the buildings, in this driven by the search for a more profitable economic return. Also that the fine urban grain of the urban tissue and the lack of a clear visual and hierarchical organization of the townscapes led to a general sense of confusion and an not always pleasant mixture of apparently incompatible functions and forms. Indeed all the most industrialized Japanese cities have retained very little of their historical heritage and traditional urban landscape, and to the general visitor they give a sense of chaos and alienation. The anthropologist Gunther Nitschke as this to say regarding the quality of the modern Japanese city:

“...As Japan rebuilt her devastated city after 1945 and lunched the high-growth economy, the sense of transient resurfaced on a gigantic scale and in a complete secular mode. The Japanese city of today is largely a haphazard, interchangeable mosaic of postage-stamp land parcel that seem rather messy form the view point of classical aesthetics. Yet it is hygienic, efficient and very adaptable to rapid change, and hence an important underpinning of the world’s second largest economy. The Western concept of “City Beautiful” and even “Urbs Eterna”, centered on the civic square with splendid and hardly changing public institution, has as his counterpart in Japan the “City Vital”, flexible and energetic with constant easy access to entertainments and information. While the masses indeed sleep in “rabbit hutchess” they work and play in cities that have no equal anywhere for liveliness, visual complexity and social dynamics.”

Nitschke reconnects with the idea of the city as a system which interconnects different places and spaces and creates a sense of perpetual impermanence and transience, and furthermore recognizes among the elements which characterize the life in the contemporary Japanese city qualities such as livability and flexibility, and the fact that in physical terms the city is an energetic and dynamic patchwork of styles, forms, functions and spaces. The geographer Cotton Mather also recognizes some peculiarities of the Japanese urban landscape and classified them into 5 primary characteristics which are: a) a paucity of idle land, b) compactness, c) interdigitation, d) meticulous organization, and e) immaculateness, which essentially related to the very nature of Japanese archipelago, a land with few plains and high mountain chains covered with dense forests. These geographical and topographical conditions in turn create a condition of absolute necessity to maximize and carefully manage the use of the space available in rural and urban contexts. Thus the Japanese urban landscape presents few underused areas inside the intricate urban fabric, is extremely compact, hosts diverse and numerous functions on the same limited extension of soil, and call for a high standard of organization of the activities while showing a high degree of cleanliness and efficiency.

Another quite striking and effective description of the contemporary Japanese townscape comes from the analysis of the geographer and orientalist Augustin Berque, who observes how the experience of moving and living inside a city like Tokyo is something that has few parallel in the Western world; he rightly recognize that for the typical Tokoyoite (but the same can be said for most of the Japanese cities) the city is not a world of objects, as can be perceived by the western eyes, but a visual filed or space where the...
reality tends to fade the materiality of the forms and objects, and where it is difficult to distinguish the inside from the outside of this realm. Describing the experience of moving from the interior of a metro or railway station to an underground department store of shopping arcade to the inside of an high-rise building tower which contains an interior road of restaurants from which it is possible to enter a private room surrounded by sliding panels, along this progressive process of moving/entering different zones and spaces a person will not perceive the well-defined forms and physical areas of a real object through which is proceeding, but only the progression through a labyrinthine system of functional interiors of an immaterial and undefined space, and the hidden paths of an invisible city.

The image of the traditional (and modern) European city is mostly built according to some well-preserved and rooted canons, such as the organization around major vistas and the main perspectives focusing on monuments or certain elements of the landscape, the regularity of the plan, the clear hierarchy of zones, streets and buildings, therefore the city appears to be generated to be observed and understood at a glance; the urban design of the traditional and modern Japanese city follows different rules and aims at different goals, and the most interesting aspect is the preference for what seems to be a process of progressive organic growth of fragmented parts, and in general the rejection of the visible forms as main generator of the urban composition. What to the occidental observer seems to be disorder and confusion in the Japanese city instead is perceived by the Japanese as permeated by what Yoshinobu Ashihara calls a sort of “hidden order”, a peculiar quality of Tokyo and by extension of most of other urban settlements in Japan, which refers to the importance and preeminence of the regeneration and integration of functions, and the flexibility and the variety of the activities and landscapes present inside the city, which is not designed and built on an imposed order and rigid pattern, as often is the case in the West.
Conclusion

Commenting on the transformation of the townscape of Tokyo during the last boom of urban redevelopment projects in Tokyo in the late 1990s, the Japanese critic Hiroshi Suzuki compared this city to an “island universes”\(\text{xii}\), where the competition in a global economy and the search for further modernization of the existed urban environment in the name of a city-branding ideal has produced a series of microcosms of self-sufficient urban communities mainly as high-rise towers areas rise as oases amidst an overall ocean of chaos and evolving forms.

Certainly the total acceptance of the artificial landscapes and the constant contrast between human-scale and mega-scale are indeed elements always present in any part of the city all over Japan, shaped by the concerns especially of the state and big corporations to provide pleasant and effective mass consumerism spaces for the people, who indeed enjoy the spotless and carefully designed public and semi-public areas scattered in the urban realm. The constraints of the limited space in the city, together with the constant risks of natural disasters, have been functional in an approach to technology as a necessary tool to improve and make safer the daily life in the large metropolises. The Japanese urban environment as a complex mosaic of fragmented landscapes composed of high densities mixed used blocks, vast mono-family residential enclaves and compact buildings which expand as high rise towers or as artificial mines in immense underground developments are something fascinating and often inevitable to satisfy the current standard of life of a sophisticated and highly sensitive society.

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(EM)BODIED PRIVATIZATION AND COMMUNIONATIVE ENCLOSURE IN MCLUHAN’S GLOBAL VILLAGE: MOBILE PARKING APPLICATIONS AND OTHER RESTRICTED PIECES OF THE DIGITAL STREET

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INTRODUCTION:

PRIVATE (COMMUNION) COMMUNITIES: WYCHWOOD PARK AND ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE

Accepting that architecture styles and urban planning are representative of the present tense cultural dominant it is illuminating to map Marshall McLuhan's long-term choices in his private and public residencies over the theoretical constructions that were built from within these spaces: to use as analogy; as illustrative of distinctive and constitutive worldviews in his work; and/or to see the mediation by McLuhan of the cultural dominant imbedded in his architecture. McLuhan's public residences in Catholic education institutions - primarily St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto - have previously been discussed in a similar vein as illustrative, as has the influence of his belief in Catholic Humanism in his overall thought and theoretical project, and the ensuing blind spots. This communion-ative aspect of his work is commonly glossed over in popular cultural invocations of McLuhan, and their one-sided (mis)use of his aphorisms that occludes that which is not euphoric and utopian.

What I would like to suggest here is that something analogous may be said of his choice of private residence in the private community of Wychwood Park in Toronto, and that we can see in his public residence today, and specifically in its organization of (municipal) parking-space, a generalization of the logic that organized and structured McLuhan's Wychwood Park. That like the Catholic Humanism that rests with McLuhan's constructions from within the academy, the cultural dominant of the space of Wychwood Park lies in McLuhan's work. This is liberal (or libertarian) individualism subjected a priori to a (free) market.

Wychwood Park, where McLuhan lived for the duration of his career and time in Toronto is a small and highly exclusive gated enclave within the core of the city where the residents continue to have control over much of the local infrastructure, including roads and parking, because the community is privately incorporated. This pocket universe stands in apparent contrast to the "public" rules, taxation, and supported infrastructure, especially at the municipal level of government that fully surrounds it, and arguably, that it relies upon. Looking at this space we can see how it is situated within and thereby relies/encloses/restricts upon the public space of the City of Toronto in a similar fashion to how the denominational space of St. Michael's College relies/encloses/restricts upon the secular space of the University of Toronto. One can then say of McLuhan's (largely) non-comitital attitude when pressed on the practical and lived implications, for individuals and/or communities, that would follow from their greater mediation within the parameters of a free market liberal individualist system, that this absence (and its contradictions) was mediated from or in his choice of space for living.

The privatized infrastructure, use, and iterability of the space of Wychwood Park is or becomes mirrored in McLuhan's picture of the Global Village and what has become subject(ed) subject(ivity), in and through the axiomatic of digital architectural reduction into binary building blocks. This holds
true whether we look at the building blocks of the Global Village in their material, digital, and/or augmented/blended form (which are always also spaces). It is an enclosure and foreclosure through systemic finiteness and/or abstracted total reducibility to a marketable and/or mediated thing that is fundamentally built into the architecture of binary computer coding. Which is to say all of the hyperreal mediated world and everything which follows it in ontological order and in episteme structuration today. And as quantum computing where one space can possibly/actually be many - always possibly "becoming-[s]"5 - remains a though experiment and hypothesis, this makes McLuhan's hypothesized mediation and our material/actual mediation, like with the reduction performed to make marketable the heterogenous, reliant on a fundamental dichotomy of "1s" or "0s." This removes the actuality of multiple-states and "différance" and strikethrough1 or the other "third terms" of the various deconstructionism(s)7, except as a simulacra of these (no longer possible) "events," through their systemically reduced foreclosure/enclosure.

SEMIOTIC STRUCTURATION: GLOBAL VILLAGE STREET (FORE/EN)CLOSURES

In the digitally mediated or augmented/blended form-spaces that in the first instance constitute the "Global Village," to be in any sense is to have been privately mediated into being, be it in the physical space, its building blocks, ones body, ones mind, or ones thoughts (including those that compose what is generally referred to as self understanding). This is the case for the only way to view them, and the material of the space that they overlap: Google Glass® (use) providing a pictographic illustration of what is the general condition; or how we see what is around us only through a branded smartphone whose interactive screens like any website only offer the illusion of being there, in the phone, and are materially and proprietarily elsewhere. This also holds for the mobile apps for smartphones that structure/suture traffic "flows," like Google Maps®, and in the proprietary and specific apps which allow for the continuous mobile regulation and payment of public parking that is being introduced in the City of Toronto and on the campus of the University of Toronto. The apps and restricted mediation hardware and software that illustrate the electronic sense and senses that McLuhan spoke of, as exteriorization, are here rather shown as also a radical interiorization, and found in the interior of McLuhan's public residence. In this sense the species being and being intelligible is subjected to an enclosure (movement) on and into what once had been invariable walls of the subject and body for McLuhan's (free) market liberal(ism) and McLuhan's Catholic Human(ism).

If we follow Virilio's universal dromoscopic theology as the dystopic extension of McLuhan, this is a total substitution in real time of "the real," and a telematic withdraw from life. If viewed as or even potential-simulacra - Baudrillard's (heretic) always-present conjecture - it becomes a secular (dis)possession of the walls of the liberal subject as they are written or mediated into being, first online, then offline, and finally in the present-tense now as an indistinguishable circuit. This instantaneous circular movement of the image-ination where Baudrillard and Virilio collide as McLuhan's Apostles is in this instantaneous village-like proximity, in this materiality of mediation: mediated self-images and pieces of the city (or university) and its base components, all a substitution of a simulacra, and/or a simulacra of a substitution that becomes ontologically primary due to the speed of it's diffusion, rate of "circulation,"3 and digital permanence, by being always there when compared and queried, in contrast to the analogue. The mediated space of Wychwood Park, the parking at the University of Toronto, and the coding of the material and existent Global Village and its mediated cities all express the same movement: they overwrite, first as the signifier that becomes the signified in pure digital spaces, second in augmented/blended form-spaces, and finally in material spaces, through a process of historicism and ownership signified in the digital record, recording, visualization or mapping exercise. And in becoming universally reliant on this medium of intangible material and social semiotics we self-flagellate into a state of irreversible glaucoma over that which digitality can not enclose or otherwise totally appropriate. Which is to say that that which can not be so mediated and hypervisualized is no longer (the) 'matter that matters'.

The restrictions in the hardware and software of the (digitally navigated) streets that we find in digitally materialized semiotics generally came about with the intrusion of exclusively held signs from
the market into and as conditioning techné for digitality as medium. This makes sense, if one wants to make surplus value greater, which the victors in a free market situation are tautologically conditioned to do, as cultural or juridical norm and/or law, past the point of (ir)rationality. We can see this in that the relative and intangible nature of a brands worth or worthlessness not to mention success should be - but is not - a logical circumscription of the classic profit motive and calculation. This is branded-capitalism that operates by stamping a name that signifies and makes restricted subsequent ownerships and uses. The contemporary importance of branding in (free) market capitalism(s) must be noted here: the former's role in providing the non-rational, non-economic, and non-free or clear basis of subject and (subjected) individual interactions, transactions, and systemic support in more "advanced forms" of the latter.

To buy things for accumulation, resale, or use, where with the odd exception - i.e. internal medical devices and implants - the object stays external to the self is a very different form than the contemporary branding moment of digitalized capitalism where branded mediating devices and technologies magnify the subject(ed) self. Today copyrighted and restricted bits and pieces can be found within - counter liberal and Catholic Humanist discourses on the sanctity of the person and body - and are henceforth a priori (re)constituted forward and backward in history from the frozen but totally circulated present tense. Restricted techné is required for one to have the real ability (which is utterly hyperreal) to engage in action, to express oneself, and have a (now secondary) ownership over the organs that act with ones name. This holds even in self understanding (and with literal seeing) of these magnified and electronically exteriorized bits and bites of the central nervous system: this is the digitally rendered path that leads to restrictions that move from binary language, over and through bodies and onto and over material space. This is what happens when legally protected stamps start acting as more than just a sign and referent to a subsection of a specific commodity or thing: when these stamps get verbed, adjectived, and nounced in a medium that can enact a materiality.

**Logo(s): Logos**

McLuhan missed the importance and this moment of branded-capitalism, cloistered at St. Michael's College (within the University of Toronto) and behind and blind to the gates of Wychwood Park (within the City of Toronto). Naomi Klein, spatially co-situated in the open exteriority of these two spaces - as a student at the University of Toronto and then living and working in the City of Toronto starting in the late 1980s and 1990s - is therefore a proprietary complement with which to remix McLuhan as they both inhabited and were influenced by the same spaces when they produced their seminal works: Klein gives us branding and political economy, but relies on an identified "real," and a real that is ontologically primary for the possibility of progressive political action to occur; McLuhan gives us communication and big-picture notions of mediated subjectivities, communities, and space, but forgets to identify how it will be taken up and subjected to "real" existing rules and structuration.

Klein, in *No Logo*, "the bible" of the English speaking "anti-globalization movement" of the late 1990s said that "logos, by the force of ubiquity, have become the closest thing we have to an international language...we have almost two centuries' worth of brand-name history under our collective belt, coalescing to create a sort of global pop-cultural Morse code. But there is just one catch: while we may all have the code implanted in our brains, we're not really allowed to use it" because of copyright and other socio-legal restrictions. But while Klein's work finds a difference in degree and a difference of kind in the semiotic project of post-Fordist global capital than McLuhan would have encountered, the relations and relationships looked at are framed in a criticism of "late capitalism," or "neo-capitalism," rather than one that looks at the (digitalized) medium through which branded-capitalism exerts itself, and enacts an ontological reordering of the self through branded personalized products, that create and utterly subject the hyperreal over and as the material of those spaces, and thereby comes to completely own the streets and (coded) architecture of the (singular) Global Village.

While Klein's analysis described the vast space for the branding project, it never places, imagines, or thinks we would accept the hyperreal as becoming either the condition for power over material reality,
or as being subject to enclosure that would or can render finite all which can fall subject to its abstraction, which is to say everything. To extend Klein with McLuhan one then sees that private signs power first-world and BRIC capitalism, language, and bodies at the material level. At the architecture of digital and in augmented/blended form-spaces they are power, the law, the hail, and the total structuration and even being of the “subjects” that are no longer also “individuals,” as well as the space itself. At the material level we can see the attempt at total containment, and the slippage and failure to make finite and subject to total control: I do not have a coffee in the morning; I have Starbucks®. Starbucks® does not own, in a proprietary sense, the central nervous system that it has conditioned. But where we are speaking of the digital and hyperreal, there is total foreclosure during branded mediation. I do not speak on a cellular phone; iPhone® speaks through Twitter® on AT&T®. I am not using my computer right now: Microsoft Word® on Apple® MacBook Air® is producing a Microsoft Word Document®. I do not look something up, search it, or research it; Google® is what is happening and being and the medium in which it is happening. What we see with the “electronic exteriorization of the central nervous system” through branded and otherwise restricted bodily organs is that the "I," or subject boundaries of self ownership of liberal individualism, or the body that Catholic Humanism cultivates for that intangibility (the soul) are all subjected (and) subject(s) to a total and finite subsumption. And remember, it is clearly seen, and only legally and legitimately seen and this mediated subject otherwise registered and a ‘body with matter’ in and through restricted spaces and devices.

(LOOKING) THROUGH THE GOOGLED-GLASS, AND WHAT (REMAINS OF) McLuhan (ARE) FOUND

The total enclosure/foreclosure of the roads of the Global Village, the total rendering over, is found also today in Wychwood Park. Community members meet less and less in the flesh, even to mark the death of 'flesh'. Their space of interaction/interpassivity is (as for most) a mediated digital electronic exchange, as with the site of the enactment of the real gate or gate in the real - which is to say the same thing: a/the digitally mediated gate, with markings that are only visible to the "digital eye" - that separates the community from the rest of the City of Toronto. Wychwood Park's privatized logic - which is a branded community logic - is generally expressed outside the gate as the (ontological) flattening of the "vibrant" and "absurd" "multiplicity" of possible "becoming-[s]" of the material (world) and individuals into one becoming and one subject(ed) subjectivity. One becoming and one subjectivity only, that moves backwards to claim authority and ownership over the past, and from a present tense, that in being digitally mediated is utterly parcelled and owned, it thereby institutes itself into and as any future, which becomes singular(ly) enclosed: digital mediation's historicism in and as "the" record which is digitalized and (totally) globalized, with anything for 'the bodies that with matter,' now so instantly recallable that we really have a village like proximity to everything (once everything is mediated and distanced), and know who owns it all (be it piece of the self or soul or hardware or software) through domain (name) enclosure; here the enclosed/foreclosed nature of that which falls into the/a domain name as the/a condition for its being, just an example of the most obvious total foreclosure of subject(ed) space and its subject(ivity).

PARKING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO AND TOTAL SUBJECT(ED)(IVITY): A CONCLUSION ON THE FORE/ENCLOSED HAIL

At the abstract level, for Althusser, one becomes subject to power through the turn in response to the hail of "hey, you there!" uttered by the representative of power. At the practical level, the various institutions of the state, such as the university and its agents, structures, and ideologies perform and enact this hailing and making subject. At the campus space that McLuhan and Klein shared, today the parking authority and its iterative power over subject material and ideological subjects shows the general condition: the finite transcription onto the flat (ontological) surface of the utterly reductive digital medium, bringing "dasein" into matter, and making of them the same (general) non-denominational digitally coded material: which was the human that drove the car, which was the car that was driven, which was the space in which the car and driver moved, which was the representative
of power, as well as that which was the power which was over them. This is what the transference to mobile and remote smartphone enabled parking (apps) and the attendant organization of what was material parking spaces embodies.

This picture that follows of parking and its regulation on the campus being the general (and enthusiastically embraced) condition for the future of the City of Toronto, as with other urban municipalities:\textsuperscript{18} the parking attendant holding a smart phone out in front of their body like an occult talisman, seeing the correct cars, their organization, and space, without looking up from the institution's smart phone, that has become the actual representative of power; the existence (or not) of a non-tangible circulation between the app on the smart phone that represents the driver - who here becomes but a conduit for a financial institution and not a/the flow - that makes a payment in and of hyperreal capital to the institution that is the university. Or adds to their original payment for an ownership over the virtually organized space in time and on the digital record without engaging with the car and its space; that the projectile and its passenger is here made fully secondary and contingent, as with the body and soul, means that we have moved beyond being able to work in Virilio's "dromoscopic" theology - as a possible "electric extension" of McLuhan's Catholic Humanism - and find a singular site of contradiction and collapse for the two absences noted at the beginning of this piece.

If one were to look out the window from the material site "St. Michael's College" as would have McLuhan while mediating on the future, one would not see this frozen image of King's College Circle; looking through the Microsofted Windows that pepper the hyperreal domain (name) of the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology, simultaneously, in their copyrighted Google Map(ed)\textsuperscript{®} and Google's Street (View)\textsuperscript{®} form it could appear. What the latter sees - the (singular) "electronic eye" that de-realizes différence in the act of rendering it - is that the hail of power, through what was its representative whom is reduced to a (less than) animal (existence) that holds the mediated device which speaks, sees, and disciplines, is itself only recognized, engaged with, and responded to by the mediating device that paid for the parking, where the "subject" that was to respond has stopped being anything but a conduit - subject(ed)(ivity) - that here facilitates the circulation of hyperreal capital between sites of power: from (financial) institution to the institution (of the university); reducing power to a self-referential ultimate moment of speaking with itself. No slippage here with leftover time on the meter, or selling the unused ticket,\textsuperscript{19} as the parking paid is tied to the vehicle and its registration and to its driver that are now merely part of the space: the institutions fore/enclose and make finite the hail and response as part of the same moment. (One can of course picture the more perfect self-referential circulation that will occur when "parking" with the Google(d) Car, or with Volvo's existing program of self-driving cars,\textsuperscript{20} that fully responds and replies to the hail that happens without the need for a response from the subject, or subjects generally/(im)materially/actually: without any plural (and human) "Ts" even necessary for the absolute "smoothness" of utterly "striated\textsuperscript{21}" and enclosed space).
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5 c.f. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s use and latter appropriations within anti-humanist frameworks (i.e. Jasbir Puar).


7 This also holds true for the unconscious or “objet petit a” of psychoanalysis, for that matter.


9 First as part of language(s) and discourse(s); then reinforced with socio-legal structuration(s); and finally, and different in the total reductionism of differences that it performs, which makes the first two moments more enforceable and is one of the reasons that its logics have won out as they support the existing victors, in the singular binary code that comprises the medium of digital mediation and from which the Global Village is built, and the local villages of contemporary cosmopolitan liberal globalization navigated and ordered.

10 This is true, even of a base commodity, like a staple food product, or coffee, and its use in the media. Here one builds up the name of that stamp, however the actors within this system will, so that that name has perceived value in and of itself, and then they charge as much as they can for that stamp (and what it subjects).

11 Naomi Klein, No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 1999), xxxvi and 176.


13 Jameson, Postmodernism Or, The Cultural Logic Of Late Capitalism.


16 Rankin, “Inside the weird world of Wychwood Park.”


19 This can be extended and personalized over a full country, as one can see in the case of Singapore, and where the bill tells you where you have been.
One can think of here the various blockages of Deleuze and Guattari, or attempts to undo and show the holes of totalizing transcription, say in Butler's or Foucault's re-reading of this process, erased as possibility and "becomings": a singular and full deconstruction of "vitality."


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INTRODUCTION:

McLuhan and others have suggested our realities are mediated. However the spaces of this mediation have not been very clearly articulated. Our aim here is to look beyond language to urban media and the ways urban realities are historically constructed. McLuhan has alerted us to the way mediation defines the scales, paces, shapes and patterns in human affairs (McLuhan 7), and elaborates its psychic and social consequences (McLuhan 8). Our default understanding of this mediation is of network ‘spaces of flows’, imagined across a global abstract objective space. But for McLuhan media work from the subject perspective, as extensions of ourselves. How are we to imagine this working and what is the nature and form of this space? A research on the historical formation of the urban space of Los Angeles suggests a resolution to this methodological quandary in relation to urban space. The scales, paces, shapes and patterns of the affairs of Angelinos has developed through a number of technological and spatial phases of technological modernity, new phases and spaces building on phases and spaces which came before, which then exist in mutually supportive and transformative relations with one another. We will describe this process making use of a series of explanatory maps and conclude by suggesting that technology and the spaces of the urban are not the extensions of man in an abstract extensive space but a series of historically formed technological spaces in which technology itself has no teleological agency but is contingent on practical spaces formed to and mediating everyday reality and agency for modern people. Our conclusions build on and adjust those of McLuhan.

MEDIATING REALITIES

McLuhan and others have suggested our realities are mediated. At the same time the spaces of this mediation, and of the realities mediated, have not been very clearly articulated. One reason for this is that we live, partly at least, in language and language, particularly written language, allows us to disengage from space and place. But mediation, and meaning, go beyond language and into the world; there are multiple technologies of mediation, of which language is just one. The ‘curtain of objects’ (Leroi Gourhan) we surround ourselves with is one manifestation of more situated mediation; another is physical urbanisation – historical processes of definition of territory and city – which mediate our place in the world. This expansion also begins to help us understand the nature of mediating technologies, what their spaces might be and how they might be formed.

According to McLuhan mediation defines the scales, paces, shapes and patterns in human affairs (McLuhan 7) with psychic and social consequences (McLuhan 8). Our senses are extended in media but these are not simply physiological and neurological capacities but also go out in the world by defining phenomena of place, scale, identity and much more besides. For McLuhan media extend ourselves but we tend to imagine this mediation against the background of an absolute extensive space. These extensive spaces are instead both subject-centred and products of historical processes of definition and construction. We see this in
relation to urbanised territory which we propose is a technology (or technologies) of human delocalisation and extension into the world. We report here on a research on the historical formation of the urban space of Los Angeles to show how the scales, paces, shapes and patterns of the affairs of Angelinos has developed through a number of technological and spatial phases of modernity: new phases and spaces building on phases and spaces which came before in imbrications in which they exist in mutually interactive relations with each other. These spaces exist as relational topologies which embody place knowledge (of polities like neighbourhood, city, region etc. along with their normative interrelations and scales) in the physical structures of urban fabrics.

We sense the world – and ourselves – through technologies and the spaces they form. We define and identify places and things depending the ways our relations to them and their relations to each other are mediated and configured. The technologies we describe are not simply those of the motor apparatus of mobility, not just the automobiles, planes, trains, trams and busses of the modern city, but are the networked means through which the world in its delocalised forms (at various scales of neighbourhood, city, region, state, globe and so on) appears to us. As technologically mediated people we are no longer tied to locality but use network forms embedded equally in the world and in our knowledge of the world to both think and find our way through the world. In the modern era the grip of these media has if anything tightened as cities have been formed to accommodate the logistics of first industrial and then post-industrial production and social reproduction, and as nation states have been formed as the territorial dimensions of national societies and economies, and as players in global relations of power.

We live nonetheless in a world which is not a ‘technological totalisation’. Instead technology is enrolled contingently to incorporate the world in different ways and at different scales. These technological incorporations are social in that they are affordances that can be used and appropriated within and across social groups that have access to them. They also begin to define the spatialisation of particular forms of urban social – industrial for example, or suburban – life.

We will describe this process making use of a series of explanatory maps and conclude by suggesting that technology and the spaces of the urban are not so much the extensions of man in an extensive space as a series of historically formed topological spaces in which technology has no autonomous categorical status or teleological role but whose role is contingent on the constructed spaces that mediate everyday realities for modern people.

TECHNIQUE AND MILIEU

Medium is also milieu – the in-between but also the environment. We are environed in media and it is a character of environment that it does not appear to us, what appears are the objects milieu mediates to us, the subject. McLuhan was not the first to see this. We first review a series of classic studies to expand the idea of medium and introduce the idea of environment.

For Aristotle the middle term in the syllogism:

Every human is mortal
Socrates is a human
Therefore Socrates is mortal

mediates between ‘Socrates’ and ‘mortal’. The middle term mediates but then disappears having fulfilled its mediating function. Frederick Jameson spoke of the ‘vanishing mediator’ (Jameson). The ‘vanishing’ is a product of the fact we tend not to see media but through
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media: we don’t see the telescope, we see the stars, and we don’t see the particle detector, we see the particles. And the more ‘environmental’ media are, the more complete the ‘vanishing’ they effect.

Aristotle’s example is dialogical, and there is a sense in which we live in language and language is our environment. But in a more original phenomenological sense we live in the world and our world is mediated by way of world forming and mediating technologies, language being just one of these. What is mediated is the object in a <subject–mediating technology–object> relation. What is ‘technology’ in this relation? Phenomenologically oriented thinkers like Ian Hacking, Peter Galison, Don Ihde, Andrew Feenberg, and others have focussed on technologies of seeing. Microscopes, telescopes and other optical devices need to be seen as equipment plus observer and observed. The observer must be included because an object is only an object to the subject and in the life and practice of that subject. Don Ihde argues that our scientific practice is just as much a part of our lifeworld as any other kind of practice and that Galileo needed a telescope rather than any scientific ‘method’ or ‘attitude’ to make his discoveries (Ihde). There is no loss of ‘objectivity’ in this practice: both subject and object are perfectly real, while what they mean is mediated in the relation (Read 2012).

Taking it another step towards environment, Foucault’s Panopticon is the exemplary case. The guard observes the prisoner through the mediating technology of the Panopticon – a technological space in the form of an architectural construction and design for structuring seeing by intermediating subject-object relations. Media may be technical extensions of our senses but they are more profoundly also the spaces through which we see, know and do things.

TECHNOLOGICAL SPACES

Have we got to the bottom of medium and environment yet? The last classic case is the oak tree of the ecologist Jakob von Uexküll, inhabited in different ways by a bark beetle, an owl, a squirrel, an ant, a bird and a fox (Uexküll). The oak tree supports not just various animals but also many of the objects and places (acorns, branches, bark, truck, roots and fissures and openings in them) that feature centrally in the lives of these creatures. In fact the tree is not even a tree to them: the tree (and some of its neighbours) is again medium and milieu – ‘technical support’ for the intermediation of subjects and objects. For these creatures there is a space or infrastructure of subjects and their significant objects and places within reach. Apparently we should not be too strict about what we call a technological space – a better word may be infrastructure – and should rather consider the character of the space produced.

It is this space that archaeologists map when they excavate an ancient dwelling. It is a differently scaled but analogous space they map when they excavate an ancient town. These spaces locate significant objects and places, not on an already produced map in orthographic projection, but in the projected everyday shared lives and practices of a household in the first case and an urban community in the second. Cartographic space is produced in order to mediate a modern, scientific and analytical view on the world. This has nothing to do with this map which enables and represents life and knowledge as it is lived. Our common understanding of this other map and space as cognitive or subjective (and therefore prone to error) is a misunderstanding. This map is about point of view certainly but has nothing to do with any mental interiority; instead it is about how subject positions relate to objects through media in the world.

The meaning space of Los Angeles in 1890 was not much different in principle to the ancient town the archaeologists excavated. Significant places like homes, workplaces, shops and civic
buildings are dispersed over a generally walkable area and the medium by which one knew where things were and moved from the one to the other was a very ancient urban technology – the street grid scaled to the pedestrian.

What about more modern cities? Cities acquired modern movement technologies when they grew beyond the reach of pedestrian movement in the industrial era. Again we should think less much about the specific technologies than about the mediating spaces produced. In LA the streetcar network had by 1940 established a new grid, at a new urban scale, laid over the old pedestrian grid. The objects and places it related were the streetcar suburbs that had been developed oriented to this space, along with an expanded downtown intensified by its incorporation in this new space. The lives and practices of Angelenos had appropriated and accommodated themselves to a new space and scale.

Lives and practices appropriated and accommodated themselves to an even larger automobile space with the building of the freeway network after the second world war. Urban development responded and automobile suburbs were built oriented on this space. What Reyner Banham called Autopia was a coherent space – “a single comprehensible place, a coherent state of mind, a complete way of life” (Banham 1978:213) and a different space again to a streetcar centred space. Modern technology is a part of our lifeworlds. In their modern forms, the new urban spaces have extended the capabilities of the city, in terms of size, speed and organisational potentials and have allowed us to live beyond the local in spaces that allow us to act in and know that beyond in the local.
INTENSIFYING PLACES

Each of these spaces is new, state of the art when it is built, and is inscribed over the one that came before. Each of them is whole and coherent and mediates a hegemonic orientation on and view of its own world. Each extends our capacities and those of the city itself by making the non-local available and known to us. The extended city is known and available to us through streetcar or automobile spaces. Beyond that and present already in trading, pilgrimage and other routes the world is available and known through yet larger technological spaces. Today airline and a multitude of other global technological spaces allow us to know the world and act in it in faster and even more efficient ways. But previous spaces are not eliminated. They may be themselves transformed and intensified by new spaces, especially when these are dominant and establish new urban ways of life and culture. New spaces and ways of life may appropriate and transform old ones as significant places in their own orbits.

We can see the pedestrian oriented downtown of LA going through a number of intensification and culture related changes as the streetcar and then the automobile are incorporated as new spaces for everyday urban lives and cultures. The pedestrian downtown becomes a node in first streetcar and then automobile spaces, becoming part of these spaces and taking on their character while remaining pedestrian spaces in their own right. The history of these successive incorporations in wider non-local spaces can be read in local functional and material transformations as well as in transformations in the intensity of use of the downtown.

1888: a pedestrian centre
1929: an intensified pedestrian centre in a streetcar space

1970: an intensified pedestrian centre in an automobile space

2011: an intensified pedestrian centre in automobile and global financial spaces

Of course we should also consider inter-urban relations which have also affected and made a node of LA downtown, like other downtowns worldwide, with the expansion of the global
financial sector since the 1980s. Communication, global production logistics, financial exchange and increases in air traffic have all played roles.

A TECHNOLOGY OF LOCATION?

What senses do we extend with the sense technologies of the city? The first mistake we make in thinking about this is to conflate the question directly with the technology in question. Our senses of speed and orientation may be affected of course, but what is being constructed here first of all is something we were already constructing with trade and pilgrimage routes. This is our sense of our place in the world and a sense of the world as an availability of places towards which and to which we can act. Concomitant to this sense is a practical sense of the scales of the world. We may wish to find our way to Santa Monica, or to Beijing. Each of these places becomes available to us through spaces we have constructed and consolidated historically and technically. The point about scale is instructive. Scale is normally understood to be a highly abstract concept. Some (Marston et al) doubt that scale exists at all outside of this abstraction and in the world. What we have suggested here is that scale is embedded in the constructions we have made technically and historically and that these constructions, besides embedding scale, embed places themselves in their conceptual, representative forms. Places are after all thoroughly embedded in the technics of these spaces as stops on a streetcar network or destinations in an airline network. We need of course to understand our constructions as real, but once we do this we may begin to suspect that there is no abstraction or concept in language that is not also to be found back somewhere in the world.

This place-structure is not the same as the cartographic map and the world is not the map we use to analyse it. Conversely people who cannot read maps have no trouble understanding where Beijing is or how to get there. The structure is a set of normative concepts with their interrelationships, and with their embodiment, as concepts and relations, in the historically and technically constructed world. The apparent subtlety of this point points to a momentous misunderstanding about location and about how we construct, know and engage both practically and scientifically with our geographical world. It points also to the vast constructed background ‘beyond language’, a world that is incorporated into language without revealing its sources because language is transportable. Peter Taylor contrasted the view of Jean Gottmann, who suggested that if the world was simply a smooth sphere there would be no need for the discipline of geography, with that of William Bunge who argued that with all the ephemeral detail out of the way the spatial laws of geography could operate transparently. The contrast is of a complex, organised material world on the one hand and an rather simple celestial or cerebral world on the other. The main point here is that Bunge’s ‘theory’ operates in an already formed ideal and ‘absolute’ space (and time) whereas Gottmann’s human and urban geography is an historical accretion of worldly spaces.

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RE-PRESENTING SCANDINAVIAN MODERNISM. THE GELLERUP PARK AND THE VISUAL NEGOTIATION OF THE MODERNIST SUBURB.

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INTRODUCTION

The Gellerup Park (Gellerupparken) near Aarhus in Denmark is the largest of a series of planned residential areas built as social housing in the period after the Second World War inspired by Le Corbusier’s ideas on city planning. A large portion of these areas have later experienced social problems and have officially been termed ‘ghettos’ by the former Danish government. As a result, the Municipality of Aarhus has presented a large scale physical and social reconstruction plan for the area which will be implemented during the period 2011-2030. The purpose is to “transform Gellerupparken and Toveshøj into an attractive, multifunctional neighborhood and an integrated part of the city of Aarhus.”

The project involves both the construction of new buildings and the demolishing of existing residential blocks. As a way of preparing the actual implementation of the project it has been presented to the public through information material and large scale banners visualizing the future city area, some of which are placed on the existing buildings. It is a common feature of architecture that it has to be visualized through drawings, models and animations before it can be realized. The interesting thing about this case is however that this is not just a matter involving the architect, contractor and residents but is a matter of public communication involving the whole public. This has to do with the politically controversial and contested character of these areas. Today a large portion of the inhabitants are immigrants, and the area has a reputation of high levels of crime and unemployment. It is thus viewed by critics as a symbol of a failed planning and immigration policy based on abstract ideals. The municipality states the purpose of the project as preventing a future ‘parallel society’ and “changing the image of the area in the consciousness of all citizens in Aarhus.”

While the matter is thus deeply political and the plan includes social projects and regulation as well as physical changes, the scope of this article is a little more limited. I will focus on how the meaning and valuation of Gellerupparken is constructed and negotiated through mediated representations, since what it is at stake is exactly the ‘image’ of the area in the public consciousness. In recent years the existing buildings has been the subject of several photographic exhibitions, while as mentioned the implementation of the reconstruction plan is supported by widespread public visualizations of the new architecture.

In doing so the new project actually follows a modernist tradition of regarding the aesthetic ‘education’ of the public as requisite and part of modern architecture. In this article I will trace this tradition through reexamining of some of the writings by Le Corbusier from the 1920’s and investigate how the modernist tradition is reinterpreted and represented in the current projects. This goes both for the architectural plans and the way mediation plays an active part in them. One of the starting points
is, following Adrian Forty, that the meaning of architecture has always been entangled with different forms of representations – writing, drawing, photography. In recent years digital modelling and visualization has been added to that list.

In 1970 The Gellerup Park was termed ‘the most beautiful city in Denmark’ by the Danish tabloid newspaper BT. Only a decade later the general public would at least partly ascribe the social failure of the area to the general uniformity and ‘ugliess’ of it. It is interesting and quite thought-provoking that the aesthetic judgment of the public can make such a 180 degrees turn in a short span of time, which points to the notion that aesthetics cannot exclusively refer to the physical properties of the object. This article in no way claims that the social success or failure of housing projects rely solely on aesthetic judgments, nor does it claim to explain neither the historical failure of the existing area or the probable success of the reconstruction project. It rather uses the Gellerup Park as a case to investigate the present engagement with modernist aesthetics and ideas of the city in the Danish context. The reconstruction of the Gellerup Park is one example of a series of projects in Denmark, where Post War modernist planning projects are being remodeled and developed at present. It seems that a new image of ‘the good city’ is materializing itself, and by examining the visual representations it can be examined to what extend it continues or breaks with the historical modernist vision and aesthetics.

THE EYES WHICH DO NOT SEE – LE CORBUSIER AND THE AESTHETICS OF THE MODERN CITY:

A key notion in modernism was the idea that architecture was lacking behind the rest of society and that the way industrialism and capitalism was reshaping society called for a complete rethinking of the nature of the dwelling. Le Corbusier was very clear on stating that this called for a new aesthetic as well that prioritized structural beauty over ornament, and which furthermore called for a new way of seeing and a new sense of beauty that was a sign and privilege of the truly modern man. In his writings in his and Ozenfants magazine l’Esprit Nouveau, later collected in *Towards a New Architecture (Vers Une Architecture, 1923)*, he developed the metaphor of ‘the eyes which do not see’.

At the outset ‘the eyes which do not see’ were the eyes of his contemporary architects, since they were not looking in the right place. Le Corbusier reinterpreted the concept of style so important for the study of historical architecture by stating that the style of the modern age should not be found in art or architecture but in everyday industrial objects: “Our epoch is fixing its own style day by day. It is there under our eyes. Eyes which do not see.” Accordingly his general examples in the text are those of the steamship, the airplane and the automobile. The task was to look at these industrial objects as art, which could serve as a vehicle for liberating the architect from the enslavement of tradition:

“If we forget for a moment that a steamship is a machine for transport and look at it with a fresh eye, we shall feel that we are facing an important manifestation of temerity, of discipline, of harmony, of a beauty that is calm, vital and strong. A seriously-minded
architect, looking at it as a creator of organisms), will find in a steamship his freedom from an age-long but contemptible enslavement to the past.”

The modern architect is here characterized by his fresh eyes and a certain way of viewing characteristic to him. So the architect’s task will actually be two-fold: To discover and acknowledge the new form of beauty already manifesting itself in non-architect products and translate this into architecture. This aesthetic is at the same time a new set of forms and a new conception of beauty, which demands cultivation. Hereby the perspective is shifted from the architects as professional group to the broader concept of the cultivated man as opposed to the peasant: “Decoration is the essential overplus, the quantum of the peasant; and proportion is the essential overplus, the quantum of the cultivated man.” There is thus a certain historical and hierarchal movement, where industry and progress are providing the means, while the architect’s job is to form the elements to a harmonious whole thereby creating a sublime beauty that demands a certain kind of cultivation to be appreciated:

“This standardization is imposed by the law of selection and is an economic and social necessity. Harmony is a state of agreement with the norms of our universe. Beauty governs all; she is of purely human creation; she is the overplus necessary only to men of the highest type.”

This new aesthetic was put into action in his plan for a ‘contemporary city’ of 3 million inhabitants from 1922. The plan comprising 24 skyscrapers laid out geometrically was presented as part of his Urbanisme (1924) where the presentation ends with a paragraph on ‘the city and its aesthetic’. Characteristically Le Corbusier is not depicting the city as a static image viewed from a fixed vantage point, but he is placing the viewer inside a moving car:

“This suppose we are entering the city by way of the Great Park. Our fast car takes the special elevated motor track between the majestic skyscrapers: as we approach nearer there is seen the repetition against the sky of the twenty-four skyscrapers; [...] The Uniformity of the units that compose the picture throw into relief the firm lines on which the far-flung masses are constructed. Their outlines softened by distance, the skyscrapers raise immense geometrical facades all of glass, and in them is reflected the blue glory of the sky. An overwhelming sensation. Immense but radiant prisms.”

This description contains not only a subject that is dynamically moving in space but also the aspect of time, since the bright midday is turned into twilight, making the description a sort of written movie:

“As twilight falls the glass skyscrapers seem to flame. This is no dangerous futurism, a sort of literary dynamite flung violently at the spectator. It is a spectacle organized by an Architecture which uses plastic resources for the modulation of forms seen in light.”
Three key characteristics can be noted in this description. The first one is the role of geometry, where the beauty lies in grasping the compositional principle of uniform geometrical modules in varying internal relationships, a principle typical of much modern architecture. The second is the role of light. The skyscrapers are not described as sculptures, they are prisms and the real image is the reflection of light in them. Finally it is characteristic that even though the spectator is driving through the city it is always viewed at a distance. The skyscrapers are ‘softened by distance’ and the grand order of the city plan is best comprehended from afar. Nowhere is it described how it is to be inside the buildings or inhabit them. The city is treated as one large piece of art, a dynamic sculpture seen in light.

VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS AND THE VOCABULARY OF MODERNISM:

In his *Words and Buildings. A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* Adrian Forty describes architecture as a three-part system constituted by the building, its image and its accompanying critical discourse.\(^{11}\) It is noteworthy that we up till now only have concerned ourselves with the writings of Le Corbusier. The role of the writings is in this case to ensure that the spectator perceives the drawings and actual buildings the right way; it is a way of guiding the gaze. And it might be argued that Le Corbusier’s status as ‘The Architect of the Twentieth-Century’ as Kenneth Frampton has termed him\(^ {12}\) springs exactly from his ability to at the same time produce drawings, actual paradigmatic buildings and an accompanying discourse.

Forty argues that the two types of images traditionally connected to architecture, the drawing and the photography, are actually so different that they should be treated as separate parts of the system.\(^ {13}\) Furthermore he claims that the traditional focus on architect’s drawings rather than their words stem from the fact that there is a constant battle over the verbal description and the ownership of language:

> “one of the features of the architecture system – apparently absent from fashion – is the contest between architects and the press for control over the verbal element. Although language is vital to architects […] it is striking how little discussed language has been compared to architecture’s other principal medium, drawing. Part of the reason for this disparity must surely be that whereas drawing is a code over which architects hold a large measure of control, their command of language will always be disputed by every other language user.”\(^ {14}\)

While it might be true that architects have a certain control over their drawings, the same cannot be said about photography. Rather it is disputed much the same way as Forty describes the verbal description. Here I focus on architects representations, but the need for these representations should be understood in the context a wide range of actors battling over visual meaning.
PICTURING THE GELLERUP PARK

Gellerupparken was build 1967-72 by Knud Blach Petersen Architects and was as the architects stated “governed by the ideals of the 1960’s” with “high-rise blocks placed around a park area” and built by sophisticated industrialized methods”. But already in 1974 where the quotes date they acknowledged that the ideals had changed in favor of low/dense housing and ‘modern villages’. As earlier described the area is today characterized as ‘socially exposed’ and further politicized because of the high number of immigrants living there.

In 2008 three young architects, Rasmus Therkelsen, Søren Leth and Jens Bager, arranged the exhibition ‘60’s Concrete With Love and Dreams of the Future’ with photographs by Poul Pedersen and Nicky Bonne focusing on the architecture of Knud Blach Petersen. The intention was to defend the beauty and architectonical value of the concrete architecture of the 1960’s and it was among other places shown at the central square in Aarhus. It was thus carried out once more as an attempt to educate the eyes of the public.

To exemplify the approach we can look at one of the central pictures of the exhibition depicting Klostervangen at twilight, another Black Petersen building closer to the center of Aarhus. (Figure 1) The central element is the interplay between light and structure in the building. The apartments are lit from inside but also reflects the fading light from the outside creating a varied pattern of more or less luminous spaces. A pattern of light thus emerges in the structure of the seemingly uniform apartments. This way the picture tries to highlight the aesthetic thinking behind the building and one is reminded of Le Corbusier’s description that “As twilight falls the glass-skyscrapers seem to flame.” The building is treated as an abstract work of art and is given a monumental, perhaps even religious character due to the golden light emerging from it.
On the other hand what is also characteristic is the absence of people. The football field which can be distinguished in the foreground is empty and the individual families only manifest themselves as parts of the overall pattern. The picture is taken from the architect’s viewpoint at a great distance, the same point of view that Le Corbusier prescribed in his literary drive through the modern city. The central idea of the exhibition was thus to let the general public assume the architects view thereby generating understanding and valuation of the inherent aesthetic qualities of the buildings. The focus was therefore explicitly on the aesthetics ignoring the social aspects. The social is however still present inside the aesthetics through the symbolization of the idea of a harmonious relationship between individuality and totality. The pattern of light can be seen as a symbolization of an idea central to the Scandinavian interpretation of modernism, that the standardization of material living conditions actually was the best prerequisite for exercising authentic individuality in one’s daily life: A notion of individualization through material equality.

Moreover one of the purposes of the exhibition was to save the buildings from another form of aestheticization in the form of the installation of new brick facades in order to make them more attractive to the users, which at that time was a widespread practice with similar buildings. This example thus illustrates the notion of ‘aestheticization’ as a complex term In this case different aesthetics are at play as well as different means of influencing aesthetic judgment, where physical facades and photographic representations are part of a battle over aesthetic valuation.

Turning to the current project we move from photography to digital visualization and thereby also from staging the real to staging the imagined. Whether the presentation of the current project is inspired by the 2008 exhibition is hard to tell, but in any case we once again encounter the twilight as background for the main visualization of the project. This picture is visible many places in the city of Aarhus and the existing Gellerup Park, literally overwriting the current reality with the future utopia.
The first thing that can be noted is that the existing buildings are almost absent in the picture. They can only be distinguished in the background. Even though three blocks are planned to be demolished the old blocks will still count for the most of the building mass in the future area as well. The main feature is instead a new main street and a square. It has the features of a classic boulevard with 4-6 story buildings with shops and cafés at the ground floor and trees at the center and sides. When the eye follows the street, it is led to a bridge and an iconic skyscraper as the visual focal point. While the buildings at for instance the Wiener Ringstrasse were individualized by historicist ornamentation, these buildings are individualized by patterns in their material and different kinds of formal variation. It could be argued that in this case the individual buildings are even more being treated as sculptures. In *The Culture of Design* Guy Julier, drawing on writings by Marshall Berman and John Urry, traces the roots of modern ‘place branding’ by the means of architecture to the Boulevards of Paris, the ‘flaneur’ and the development of photography shaping a visual consumption of the city-scape.  

Where the modernist city was characterized by the disintegration of the classic street through the separation of different forms of traffic, the creation of a common visual and architectonical identity for the new area thus goes through a reintegration of the street. With the references to the boulevard and the tram, the picture on the one hand refers back to the period around 1900 and a classic European image of urbanity. On the other hand the architecture of the buildings is unmistakably modern, almost futuristic, creating a mix of historical references and the promise of something completely new.

If we consider the picture as picture the most prominent feature is the almost exaggerated use of the coloring of the sunset. Also the different sources of light emanating from buildings, street lamps etc. are strongly marked while many of the persons in the picture are blurred by movement. The picture has a very strong visual appeal as a collected city scape at the expense of individual detail. For Le Corbusier the building as prism served the purpose of heightened clarity and structural beauty while light and color in this case serve the purpose of creating atmosphere and visual overwhelming of the spectator. In this sense it is closer related to the aesthetics of romantic painting or to modern commercial modes of photography. The shift from large-scale structural beauty to a more sensual and affective appeal is thus visible both in the proposed architecture and the way it is represented.

This article has focused on modernism as an aesthetic reform and how aesthetics are intimately entangled with meaning and valuation in architecture. We saw in the case of Le Corbusier how he replaced the two-dimensional focus on architecture as façade and ornamentation with a focus on architecture as sculpture, prism and structure. The legacy of modernism is not in architectural form alone however but also in the ambition of educating the public through the means of language and visual representations. The two examples show that this can be done in different ways. While the first example is explicitly solidary with the modernist ideology and tries to defend it with aesthetic means, the second is more ambiguous.
both in the architectural content and the aesthetic presentation. What they both show however is that in the case of architecture aesthetics and mediation is part of a cultural and political battlefield that plays an important role in determining the future of the city.

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20 The use of color can be related to what Günther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen in Reading Images term the ‘sensory coding orientation’ typically found in advertising, fashion and food photography etc. where color is used as a source of affective meanings. Cf. Günther Kress/Theo van Leeuwen: Reading Images (New York: Routledge 2006), p. 164-166

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BUILDING PRIVILEGE: ARCHITECTURE AND THE PRIVACY FETISH

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INTRODUCTION.

Aristocracy has traditionally been associated with determinations of natural descent, social title, accomplishment and financial riches. In contemporary times, however, under the banner of egalitarianism, these vulgar criteria have given way to more subtle ones. The first is that of leisure—an elastic commodity that suggests aristocratic distinction without many of the negative implications of exclusivity. The second and more subtle one is the criterion of space. The fact that we are prone to claim additional room, greater privacy and further remove from others fits the aristocratic template, but is also consistent with the aspirations of the broader population.

With reference to privileged space, the architect occupies the embattled border zone between creative agency and passive receptivity. Before it modifies the architect’s work and the attendant self-image, the relationship between aristocracy and the built form is already affected by two fundamental aspects of the human condition—our shared moral landscape and the prevailing modes of socialization it affords. In what follows I will discuss these two factors and their influence on the architecture of privilege. With the help of some historical examples, I will try to show how the use of space for the purpose of social distinction leads to ethical tension. More specifically, I will examine the notion of privacy and the extent to which the pursuit of it leads to social dysfunction. Only through a better understanding of these dimensions, and the imbalances thereof, can we get close to a contemporary critique of aristocratic space.

A DOUBLE BIND.

No human activity requires the sensitivity to space that architecture does. And yet it is in architecture where the grandest spatial transgressions of the aristocratic spirit literally take shape. This is not only because most significant buildings are commissioned by powerful persons and institutions. The privilege of wasted space has always been available to architecture—alcoves, voids, towers, stairways, ramps and pits are not the embarrassing leftovers of cruel tri-dimensionality, but rather often the distinguishing characteristics of the built environment. These problematic elements are, of course, not lost to utility altogether. But their purpose is very often perverse in that they serve an economy of symbolic privilege rather than an economy of lived space.

Architecture has always had an uneasy relationship with aristocracy. On the one hand, all architects retain at least an aspect of the proverbial master builder. Plato recognizes in the architect a special ability to command over others—an ability that has been associated with an executive approach to practical knowledge. [1] This position might not afford the architect total freedom, but it does suggest a mode of social distinction. Each building project can be seen as a temporary fiefdom, over which the bespectacled master builder presides with bona fide authority. The realization that the operatic diva is a category to which only very select opera singers belong does little to undermine the viability of this category as a normative and aesthetic expedient in the hierarchy of the performing arts. Similarly, it takes only a couple of “starchitects” for the entire field of architecture to assume a mantle of knowing superiority. [2]
At the same time, the interests of developers, clients, institutions, the general public, and any combination thereof, are often punishingly restrictive on design freedom. This is a reminder that the architect has always been a functionary in a social system that reaches well beyond architecture. The organizing principle of this social system is a potent combination of economics, politics, culture and history—all areas that the architect is expected to study, but is not allowed to master. [3] The architect’s voice is often lost in the negotiation of these “real world” concerns. This makes it difficult for the aristocratic stance of design sensibility—of having a superior creative solution to a mundane problem—to find a fortunate fit within some of the social hierarchies that preside over the mundane. [4]

THE ETHICS OF EXCLUSION.

In its primary meaning the term “aristocracy,” as it originated from the ancient Greek, refers to the rule of the best. This meaning delimits the application of the term to the political realm and is thus outdated. The new aristocracy manifests itself as a mode of socialization whereby various forms of perceived superiority lead to concrete behaviors. Overt claims to social superiority became universally suspect with the advent of the French Revolution, but they have never altogether disappeared. Slavoj Žižek locates the last era of overt aristocratic behavior in the United States in the nineteen-twenties, but certain aspects of this behavior have been sublimated into subtler modes of distinction since then. [5] In politics, decrees have been replaced with sponsorship and lobbyism. In society at large, ostentation has been replaced with what Thorstein Veblen has called “conspicuous leisure” and “conspicuous consumption.” If in the pre-modern past aristocracy was understood as the opposite of democracy, its new opposite is egalitarianism. This shift is one from the political to the ethical—even if democracy ensures the nominal political equality of citizens (one citizen—one vote), it does not safeguard against economic and social disparity. Disparity, in turn, at all times threatens to render the political process undemocratic. In this vicious circle, egalitarianism plays the role of an ethical corrective to democracy’s inherent ailments. [6]

Of all forms of human expression and production, it is in architecture that the reactionary non-egalitarian spirit of aristocracy finds its most natural match. This is so not only because architecture is the grandest and most expensive of these forms. It is, from the standpoint of ethics, also because of architecture’s fundamental role in the negotiation between public and private space. The notion of guilt, which Žižek recognizes as integral to the aristocrat’s self-image, is translated dimensionally into an architectural differentiation between enclosure and disclosure. It is interesting that none of Vitruvius’ architectural principles—firmness, utility, and beauty—address the issue of privacy. The only one that comes close to being relevant is the principle of utility, but this is only if one is willing to concede the importance of dissociating oneself from others by means of architecture.

Some philosophers recognize social integration as a condition for egalitarianism. [7] What this means is that the elastic notion of equality—Is it natural, as in Hobbes, political, as in Marx, or economic, as in Friedman?—begins to make sense only after it has been cross-referenced with a certain mode of socialization. On this picture we are free to suppose that peaceful cohabitation is a condition for the acceptance of natural equality, just as a culture of sharing into the means of production is a condition for political equality and, in turn, freedom of opportunity is a prerequisite for economic equality. On a deeper level, these conditions are not only relevant to the possibility of equality, but also to the intelligibility of the concept of egalitarianism itself.

PAST THE FAÇADE.
Historically, one of the greatest challenges to social integration and egalitarianism has been occasioned by what we perceive as our right to privacy. In his article on the emergence of the Florentine palace, Richard Goldthwaite notices a shift in the common attitude towards privacy at the end of the fourteenth century. While in the *Decameron* “the continual flow of characters in and out of bedrooms and houses almost defies a definition of privacy,” [8] by the end of the same century the life of the rich was gradually hidden away behind the massive mute walls of family palaces. [9] Goldthwaite identifies two reasons for this shift. The first is the general prosperity of the era which brought great riches to Florentine manufacturers and tradesmen. The second is a new tendency towards what Goldthwaite curiously calls “the public display of private status.” [10] The notion that wealth could and should be displayed for society to see seems to have arrived hand in hand with the realization that any public spectacle needed to be dispensed judiciously enough so that family and business affairs remained secret. In effect, the imposing walls of Florentine palaces played the part of a social membrane—they communicated grandness while denying any access to the distinguished citizens associated with it. [11]

But why communicate grandness in the first place, especially after a millennium of church-sanctioned asceticism? The story of the building of the Basilica of Saint Denis provides an early clue to the answer. On George Duby’s telling, the showy ostentation Abbot Suger introduced to cathedral design was in great measure due to, firstly, the emergence of the church as a driving economic force and, secondly, the abbot’s own unprecedented vanity. [12] The parallel between this picture and the one Goldthwaite paints of the advent of Florentine palatial architecture is clear—in both cases new economic realities give rise to new attitudes towards extravagance. It is important to note that in both cases the flag-bearers of these attitudes—Abbot Suger in the earlier case and the Florentine nobility in the other—avail themselves of ethical justifications for the accumulation and public consumption of wealth. In Suger’s case, the justification comes down to a proclamation of the cathedral as a “monument of applied theology” whereby architectural grandiosity becomes a physical reflection of God’s ephemeral glory. [13] On Goldthwaite’s evidence, the justification Florentine businessmen provide for their newfound predilection for pompous architectural gestures seems to come down to a misreading of Aristotle’s understanding of human greatness. [14] These justifications are dismissible because their value is not explanatory but is purely compensatory with reference to the emergence of privileged space.

The art of compensatory justification proves to be a persistent presence through the history of aristocratic dwelling. In Abigail A. Van Slyck’s “The Spatial Practices of Privilege”—a study of the architecture of a children’s cottage commissioned by the powerful Vanderbilt family in the late nineteenth century—a parallel is made between the ways in which Italian Renaissance villas and the *fin de siècle* aristocratic homestead use architectural and decorative detail to counterbalance impressions of unsavory excess. [15] Even when commoners are directly confronted with the architectural glory of privileged living, a symbolic veil must be drawn between their eyes and the object itself. An embarrassment of riches is, after all, first and foremost an embarrassment.

Slyck’s study of the Vanderbilt cottage emphasizes another aspect of the architecture of exclusivity—its role in the creation and maintaining of what Bourdieu has called social capital. The sublime façades of Florentine palaces might have been enough to create an impression of financial solvency, but in the high capitalism of nineteenth century America the relationship between physical appearances and fiscal realities is more intricate. Social isolation here concerns not only the world outside the homestead’s ornate gates, but also the inner family circle. The very presence of the children’s cottage already demonstrates a normative division put into practice by way of spatial separation. [16] While children’s “existence” is necessitated by their immense potential as “conduits of social capital,” their physical “presence” is largely inexcusable. [17] Since children are not yet prepared for direct economic activity,
they are physically implicated in a private simulation of it—behind the cottage’s serene exterior, they are taught the rules of decorum, the skills of basic craftsmanship, and the subtleties of social distinction.

FROM MANSION TO SPRAWL.

Privacy has received a deserved amount of attention from philosophers but most of the relevant scholarship is compromised by a peculiar blindness. In her exhaustive entry on privacy in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Judith DeCew identifies two concepts of privacy—as a moral (or legal) right and as a moral interest. [18] This allows philosophers to argue over the control over information about oneself, the demands of intimacy and so on, but it leaves them strangely insensitive to the social affordances that delimit the application of these principles.

The pursuit of privacy for the sake of social distinction is left unaccounted for because it falls in a space where privacy looks neither like a right nor like an interest. Our rights are something we are entitled to and our interests are something we choose to pursue. Both of these assume a basic freedom of self-assertion. When Thomas Nagel says that “the boundary between what we reveal and what we do not, and some control over that boundary, are among the most important attributes of our humanity,” he also assumes that we are all free to determine the boundary in question. [19] In the context of social distinction, however, this is an unsafe supposition. The obvious reason for this is that people in society do not all have the same latitude in deciding their own fate. For people of privilege, privacy goes far beyond the baseline of possible moral rights and interests—it is an artificially created necessity. For the rest of the population, in turn, privacy is anything but a matter of choice—it is an aspiration imposed by the ever elusive dream of upward mobility.

One of the unsavory implications of the philosopher’s class blindness is that it renders privacy unintelligible for the better part of humanity. When Nagel says that “everyone knows that there is much more going on than what enters the public domain, but the smooth functioning of that domain depends on a general nonacknowledgment of what everyone knows,” he is operating on the premise that we all understand the world around us equally. [20] The concession of not saying what we know, then, is for him a small price to pay for the comfort of discretion. But all of Nagel’s operational notions—omniscience, restraint, and discretion—are a matter of specific acculturation and are thus emphatically not available to us all. Ultimately, the argument falls in the trap of assuming the same egalitarian baseline, which it hopes to prescribe.

Curiously, this philosophical tangle throws interesting light on a pertinent issue in architecture. In the negotiation of privacy, the two architectural types that win the race are the mansion and the suburban sprawl. Against the rich history between Florentine palaces and their mutations into homesteads of the Vanderbilt variety, the sprawl appears refreshingly egalitarian—in suburbia distinction is seemingly replaced by sameness and unfriendly walls are replaced by open lawns. On a closer look, however, the suburban home turns out to carry many of the burdens of aristocratic dwelling. Even Robert Bruegman, an avid defender of the sprawl’s inherent value for humanity, admits that its purpose is to furnish the multitude with the privacy, exclusivity and comfort traditionally associated with the chosen few. [21] The aesthetics of homogeneity and openness is thus not a marker of social integration or even communication. [22] It is, instead, the pseudo-egalitarian cover under which social distinction assumes the shape of private domesticity.

In the sprawl architects inherit the philosopher’s mistake. The suburban home responds to neither our rights nor our interests. Its role is to wedge social aspiration firmly between the life we are entitled to and
the life we should be free to pursue. In the spirit of proper aristocratic mansions, this is done through the ample architectural allowance of space, privacy and protection. All three elements in excess are detrimental to our humanity. Getting more space than one needs or can afford precipitates economic crises. The fetishization of privacy undermines the interconnectedness that sociologists see as constitutive of our shared humanity. [23] Finally, the development and implementation of domestic security measures feeds back into suburban paranoia. [24]

PRIVATE HELL.

As architecture becomes complicit in the harnessing and sapping of various motivational forces, it poses a physical barrier to social integration. The very notion of division—between types of labor, social classes, and the spaces that help distinguish them—becomes an architectural problem. [25] Children are removed from parents so that each can attend to their tasks more fruitfully, commoners are removed from one another in the hope of attaining aristocratic standing, aristocrats are removed from commoners so that the latter will perform better for the sake of the former’s enrichment, and, finally, aristocrats are removed from their like for the sake of symbolic individuation. Ethically, the logical conclusion of this progressive dissociation is extreme privacy. Architecturally, it is the lonely lunatic’s fortress tower. The following passage from Frederic Jameson perfectly captures the dread of both conditions:

“All of this suggests some deeper drive to repress the social and sociability as such: my reward for acquiring a fortune is my possibility of withdrawing from everything that might remind me of the existence of other people in the first place… Just as commodity reification in capitalism is determined by the attempt to flee class guilt and, in particular, to efface the traces of production and of other people’s labor from the product, so here too, in the great estates (imaginatively reinvented in E.L. Doctorow’s Loon Lake), my deepest social longing lies in the will to escape the social altogether, as though it were a curse, matter or animality from which privacy allows an escape into some angelic realm. It is a contradictory longing, to be sure, whose ‘comeuppance’ Orson Welles displays for us in Citizen Kane’s old age, or in the remorse of the last heir of the Ambersons.” [26]

If Sartre is right about hell being others, then, after Jameson and the suburban sprawl, it is also difficult to believe that the avoidance of others will bring about the coveted private paradise. The problem with privacy is that, like money, it readily lends itself to being pursued for its own sake. The danger in the case of money, as Aristotle and many after him have recognized, is that venturing beyond its utilitarian applications tends to compromise its projected value. As I hope to have shown, a similar danger exists in fetishizing privacy. Architecture has always been responsive to humans’ right to privacy but it does not have to shoulder the responsibility for its aspirational perversion. Ultimately, an ethics of architecture should resolve the question of privilege before it can proceed towards the harder tasks of economic, social, and cultural integration.

References


[4] This predicament is captured by Alan Colquhoun in the following: “With architecture so bound to the sources of finance and power, it is much more difficult for the architect than for other artists to operate within an apparently autonomous subculture or to retain independence from bourgeois taste that has been the ambition of art since the early nineteenth century.” David Goldblatt, “The Dislocation of the Architectural Self,” The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 49, no. 4 (Autumn 1991): 337.

[5] “The twenties were the last moment in which a genuine American leisure class led an aggressive and ostentatious public existence, in which an American ruling class projected a class-conscious and unapologetic image of itself and enjoyed its privileges without guilt, openly and armed with its emblems of top-hat and champagne glass, on the social stage in full view of the other classes.” Slavoj Žižek, Living in the End Times (New York: Verso, 2010), 256.

[6] These same ailments, according to Manfredo Tafuri, were the reason why Jefferson feared the consequences of the American Revolution: “Essentially this was fear of the dangers of involution, of the transformation of democracy into a new authoritarianism, brought into being by capitalist competition, urban development, and the birth and growth of an urban proletariat.” Manfredo Tafuri, Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development, trans. Barbara Lugia La Penta (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 27.


[9] Ibid., 984.

[10] Ibid., 989.

[11] “Just as the façade of the palace as a public monument embodies the public and civic implications of a new individualistic morality, so the living arrangements behind the façade reflect the changed social conditions underlying that new morality—the withdrawal of the family into a world of privacy.” Ibid., 997


[14] “Drawing heavily on Aristotle’s ideas about magnificence and the good man, they praise wealth precisely because it gives man the wherewithal to express his status publicly.” Goldthwaite, The Florentine Palace, 990.

[15] Van Slyck notes that the porch figures of the Vanderbilt cottage represent various occupations and states of character, with the ostensible goal of cautioning the young against excess of any kind. She then draws a parallel between this use of symbolism and that of earlier times: “These details are akin to the iconography of Italian

[16] “Ever more insulated from adults in spatial terms, the bourgeois child was increasingly inseparable from adults’ perceptions of themselves… In these social circles, children were explicitly excluded from adult sociability but implicitly central to their parents’ drive for social status.” Ibid., 213.

[17] Ibid., 214, 231.


[20] Ibid., 7.


[22] “Indeed for many contemporary Americans, community seems more an optional pleasure than a civic obligation. Privacy is prized in new developments. Windows that face onto the neighbor’s house are voided. So are side entrances that might lead to chance encounters… The urge for control and privacy begets sameness. In planned communities across the United States, consistency of image is the most important contributor to the sense of shared public space.” Mitchell Schwarzer, “The Spectacle of Ordinary Building,” in Sprawl And Suburbia: A Harvard Design Magazine Reader, ed. William S. Saunders (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 79.


[25] “The built environment also granted Vanderbilts and their guests—young and old—a freedom of movement that was denied to the adults employed as their servants. Curving paths encouraged them to meander through the site, allowing them to develop a kind of muscle-memory of leisured existence. They did not need to think self-consciously about exercising their social privileges; they would simply act naturally—that is, in the way their environment suggested—and they would find that others naturally treated them with deference.” Van Slyck, “The Spatial Practices,” 235.


**Bibliography**


