Figures of Thought and the Socius: Design, Creative Mapping, & Education

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Starting from a faculty wide discussion on teaching architecture and urbanism in the nineties at the TU Delft, Faculty of Architecture, I develop a brief historical overview of more recent planning and mapping techniques. During the many meetings at the faculty, discussions swept from 'architectural' approaches, to 'computational', to 'urban', and 'scientific'. Although more professional experts were involved, coming from Maastricht University where new teaching models were introduced earlier on, the meetings never ended in a consensus on how to teach urbanism. What seemed to be lacking was a more historically informed approach. I use James Corner's four approaches to mapping techniques to show not merely a 'technique', but the 'how' and 'why' of a particular approach. Every planning technique creates its own 'social field' in which it operates: the socius.

#Socius

#Mapping Techniques

#Education

#Teaching Models

#Urban Design

Pedagogical models and approach to the socius

More than two decennia ago, starting in the 1990s, the Architecture faculty at TU Delft in the Netherlands experimented with a new teaching curriculum called "problem-based learning" (PBL), a model that corresponds with a medical teaching model. The model was initially developed at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, in Canada, and implemented at Maastricht University in the faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences in the Netherlands. By actively learning in smaller groups the students acquired knowledge and skills. The idea is based on how human beings neurologically acquire knowledge in an active way. The acquired knowledge is always related to the practical condition of the discipline, and is, apparently, a perfect model to teach medicine. The anthropologist Rachel Prentice discusses this model in relation to anatomy as an initiation into medicine (Prentice 2012, 83). The approach allows instructors to build dissection around specific clinical cases or problems. Medical schools have hotly debated the benefits of this situated learning, she writes, in which the debate focuses on the completeness of a highly structured approach by lectures versus the clinical relevance of a problem-based approach. Proponents of the traditional anatomy course argue that problem-based learning is good in theory, but leaves gaps because students are not exposed to the entire body during clinical work. The issue is about whether the definition of immersion constitutes immersion in terminology, terms and structures, or in human cadavers.

The Department of Architecture in Delft also considered implementing the idea of problem-based learning in its curriculum. However, a critical report from a national review committee concluded that the curriculum neglected the technical and scientific aspects of the study (Bridges 2007, 757). *Bouwkunde* (the Faculty of

Architecture) at the time were still experiencing the anti-hierarchical and educational changes from the late '70s, in which the student movement's direct democracy resulted in greater freedom of choice for students. In turn, this resulted in "the land of free choice," and students doubled up the same courses over, and over again. Freedom of choice allowed students the freedom to choose their mentor and studio. As a result, some teachers were always overdrawn, and some did not get enough subscriptions to run their studio and were left empty-handed. Budget problems played an important role as well. *Bouwkunde* did not have much of a choice left— either they change the curriculum or face the closure of the faculty. In 1990, the first students started the new curriculum, and at the time *Bouwkunde* had about 2,400 undergraduates—one of the largest undergraduate classes in Europe. A huge ship had to change its course.

> *The decision to implement the innovation was basically a top-down decision, necessitated by on-going and inconclusive debate in the faculty. The key factor which motivated the choice of Problem Based Learning (PBL) was the attractiveness of a high numerical efficiency in the PBL program in the medical curriculum in Maastricht, and the Faculty Board, guided by an interim faculty director, pressed the Council to agree to the proposal.* (Graaff and Cowdroy 1997, 169).

The University of Limburg provided a preparatory course for instructors before Bouwkunde implemented the new curriculum. There was only a six-month period before implementation. In the group that I participated in, instructors compared the human body to the "architectural body" or "the architectural body of knowledge". Until now, many design studios were structured along the type of object; for instance mass housing, public buildings, villa architectures, interiors, urban design, landscape etc. In the first two

years in Delft students learned the basics. Like in medicine, all specialisations have a place in the curriculum, but there is no equivalent to anatomy as initiation. Architecture students do not take apart buildings. They do not build anything during their studies. Practice is mostly far away and starts when they graduate and begin office work or join government jobs. In the last two years students had more freedom; the last year was basically a freely chosen project supervised by two or three disciplinary mentors: architecture, construction, and an urban mentor. The new teaching curriculum encountered not only much resistance, also failed due to the old problem of the different "approaches" the mentors had in mind. The philosophy of PBL was not understood by most of the faculty, writes Erik Graaff and Rob Cowdroy (ibid). Indeed, like in Prentice's example, some teachers argued for the "complete body of architecture," or an encyclopaedia of architectural examples much like typological research, while others argued for a more situated knowledge –"the house", "the city", and "the wet cell". The discussions could not get any further since the different approaches could not agree with each other on what the "body of architecture" should look like, and how to "combine" and work together. The idea that "house", "city" and "wet cell" might be related to more historical and critical issues faded in many discussions. These difficulties might have been personal to some extent. However, the more serious issue was that the body of knowledge itself could not be defined. And worse, no one was really interested in doing so. Some wanted to explore a more "scientific" way of research and design, sometimes derived from gross cybernetic thinking, sometimes from the old paradigm: the more sociological, political, and urban considerations. A large group defended a more "architectural", "creative", or "artistic" way to work, which created a circular definition of the problem where no concept could be found to tackle the problem of design knowledge and how

to teach it. Design mentors had to learn their new roles and take a more modest position since the students were supposed to take responsibility for most of the work themselves. Students were more interested in design assignments than in their "self-study". Discussions swept from vocational to scientific, to creative, to artistic to computational. The computational turn had not yet been realised in design teaching. In the current situation, this makes it even more complicated.

In the end, it remains a question whether the "old" system, under a new name, prolongs its life. I therefore ask: where are we now? Is it any better now? This issue of Cubic Journal (2018) suggests otherwise.

The socius as figures of thought

I will focus not so much on debates in architecture or urban design strategies. My intention here is to briefly discuss what, in the early 1960s, was called "the drift", the more current process of layering, the participatory process of the gameboard, and the rhizome. The rhizome is the most complex since it comes from a philosophical figure of thought and not from urban strategies.

These four different strategies are common practice in many urban plans and development strategies in design schools, although explicitly intended fragments and similarities are not always there. For instance, many design studios take students out for site visits. "The drift" is a strategy that implies much more than just a site visit. It was conceived of as a counter movement that addresses design principles of the Modern movement. "Layering" is related to a post-modern society and also addresses late-modern design principles in developed countries. In this case, a competition entry by Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas (OMA) for Parc La Villette in Paris, the

same grounds the Situationists earlier addressed with their *dérive* or drift. Game-board strategies are discussed in the work of Raoul Bunschoten's CHORA-practices, already here we see another society addressed: Bucharest in Romania. The fourth strategy is said the most complex; a 'rhizome' is an open-ended, indeterminate strategy that refers to a philosophical concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. It is closely related to perceptual issues that relate to the drift, and the contemporary *flâneur,* which mainly deals with highly developed countries. Whether this rhizome strategy will work in "under-developed" countries is still to be seen. With this discussion on the four strategies, I want to address not just "a method", but also the "how" and "why" of the strategy. Design strategies are born in a certain period of time, and they address urban problems, as well as society as a whole. They are never "innocent", nor are they completely "objective". They are bound to different ideas about society and have different concepts of complexity.

In the conclusion of his article, "The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention", James Corner directs attention to the failure of the bureaucratic regime of city and landscape planning with its traditional focus on objects and functions, which has failed to embrace the full complexity and fluidity of urbanism and of culture generally. In authority and closure, current techniques neglect to embrace the contingency, improvisation, error, and uncertainty that inevitably circulate in the urban condition. Corner (1999, 251) states:

> *Given the complex nature of late-capitalist culture, together with the increased array of competing interest groups and forces, it is becoming more difficult for urban designers and planners to play a role in the development of cities and regions beyond scenographic or environmental amelioration.*

There is no shortage of theories and ideas abound. However, the problem is with the "translation" from these theories into meaningful design practices and new operational techniques. The difficulty today is less a matter of a crisis of what to do than of how to do anything at all, Corner argues. As he outlines this difficulty, his contribution is interesting, and a very relevant beginning point for the problems we face in urbanism and architecture alike. Throughout his article, Corner stresses the importance of *mapping* as a creative process, which is particularly instrumental in construing and constructing lived space. Mapping has less to do with a mirror of reality than with the re-shaping of the world in which we live. Mapping can unfold potential, it re-makes territory, and it can uncover realities previously not seen or unimagined. In this sense, it is a creative practice much like science. The capacity to reformulate what already exists is an important step, but what already exists is not given in perception alone, it includes natural forces, historical events, political interests, and programmatic structures. In the end, mapping should relate to socio-political issues; constructing maps without this perspective will again address and confirm that which already exists. As Corner would describe the problem, conceptual issues characterise this reformulation, and make a setting for eidetic physical worlds to emerge. Nevertheless, we tend to view maps in terms of what they represent and less in terms of what they do.

We should not overlook the durational experience and the effects of mapping itself. Landscape or space is not something given or external to our apprehension; it is *constituted or formed through our participation* with things, material objects, images, values, cultural codes, cognition, and events. Space is subjectively constituted, which makes the map more of a constructed project than of an empirical description. The map is employed as a means: effectively a

substantial re-working of what already exists. In Corner's sense, maps have very little to do with representation as depiction. They are involved in a double operation—to find and expose on the one hand, and to relate, connect, and structure on the other. Contemporary mappings do not represent geographies or ideas, as Corner writes, but rather they effect their actualisation.

Historical maps have always been caught in the dialectics of "true and false". For instance, throughout the age of exploration, European maps gave a one-sided view of ethnic encounters, J.B. Harley writes (1988, 292). These maps supported Europe's perceived God-given right to territorial appropriation. European atlases promoted a Euro-centric, imperialist view, Harley writes. He shows that natives are shown riding an ostrich or a crocodile, engaged in cannibal practices, or as on one French map of the eighteenth century, included a race of men and women with tails. Female sexuality in the depiction of African woman and allegories for America and other continents, are often explicit for the specious benefit of male-dominated European societies, according to Harley.[1]

Yet, our contemporary world changes at such speed and complexity that nothing remains certain or stable. Many people live in a world where local economies and cultures are tightly bound into global ones. Surrounded by media images and an excess of communication that makes the far seem near and the shocking merely normal, local cultures have become fully networked, Corner (1999) writes. Interrelationships and effects are becoming of greater significance for intervention in urban landscapes than compositional arrangements. Part of globalisation is our network of microelectronics and communications technology, which might change local interests in a very short time span, and even change our notions about nature and society. 'Communication', as a commonly used

term, has changed its meaning. 'Digitalisation' as part of globalisation has changed our outlook of the world. Most of this communication travels at unimaginable high speeds, yet the "means" are not to be separated from the contents, especially not in design practices like architecture and urbanism.

Cyberspace in particular forces human beings to re-conceptualise their spatial situation inasmuch as they experience their positions in cyberspace only as simulations in some "virtual life" form, as Timothy Luke argues (Luke 1999, 27). His argument is that we might need another reasoning to capture these digital worlds. The epistemological foundations of conventional reasoning in terms of political realism, as we find them in notions about city and countryside, are grounded in the modernist laws of second nature. In taking up the notions of "first" and "second" nature, Luke defines the "third nature" as the informational cybersphere or telesphere. Digitalisation shifts human agency and structure – and to this effect "the social" – from a question of manufactured matter to a mere register of informational bits. Human presence gets located in the interplay of the two modes of nature's influence. "First nature" gains its identity from the varied terrains forming the bioscope / eco-scape / geoscape of *terrestriality*, according to Luke. Our traditional notions of "space" are under pressure, and it might be wise to first see how that has changed before we go on to different mapping techniques using different notions of time and space. Ideas about spatiality are moving away from physical objects towards a variety of territorial, political and psychological social processes that flow through space, as Corner (1999) argues.

One of the most concerning aspects within the socius remains that of space. Starting from the standpoint of the geographer, David Harvey (2006, 121) argues for three different conceptions

of space —*absolute space*, *relative space*, and *relational space*. He connects his differentiations to the distinction Henri Lefebvre made: the perceived space of materialised spatial practice, the conceived space he defined as representations of space, and the lived spaces of representation. Harvey's work on how to understand this complex concept of space started in 1973 from a social dimension, with the publication of his book Social Justice and the City. The essay I will refer to here was published in 2004.[2] The influence of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Alfred North Whitehead is there. Harvey discusses a notion of relational space in the manner of Leibniz. He makes a distinction between these three different conceptualisations of space, which are all relevant for the topic of mapping urban complexity.

The interesting connection Harvey makes is to Lefebvre's work. Through the work of Ernst Cassirer, with whom he claims Lefebvre might have been influenced, Harvey relates the different notions of space. Cassirer set up a tripartite division of modes of human spatial experience, distinguishing between organic, perceptual and symbolic spaces. Organic spaces are all those forms of spatial experience given biologically and registered through the particular characteristics of our senses. Perceptual space refers to the ways we process the physical and biological experience neurologically and register it in the world of thought. Symbolic space on the other hand is abstract and generates distinctive meanings through interpretation. Harvey believes that Lefebvre draws upon Cassirer when constructing his own tripartite division of *material space*, (the space of experience and of perception), the *representation of space* (space as conceived and represented), and *spaces of representation* (the lived space of sensations, imagination, emotions, incorporated into our daily life). Spaces of representation are part and parcel of the way we live in the world. We represent it by images, photos, artistic constructions, urban game-

boards, mapping techniques and architecture. Harvey suggests a 'speculative leap' in which he places the threefold division of absolute, relative and relational space-time up against the tripartite division of *experienced*, *conceptualised* and *lived* space identified by Lefebvre. Although the matrix that is constructed or conceptualised in this way might have restrictions, it is at the same time interesting to see what it might contribute to an understanding of a mapping project.

The first spatial concept is called *absolute space*. Here space is fixed and we record or plan events within its frame. It is the space of Isaac Newton and René Descartes, and it is usually represented as a pre-existing and immovable grid that is amenable to standard measurement and calculation. It is the space of cadastral mapping and engineering practices. It is the space of measurement, more and more accurate up to measurement from space satellites. In many cases, it is the notion present in more traditional ideas about planning and urban design. The second and *relative notion of space* is associated with Albert Einstein's work and non-Euclidean geometries that were developed in the 19th century. Referring to Carl Friedrich Gauss and in particular to Leonhard Euler's assertion that a perfectly scaled map of any portion of the earth's surface is impossible, Harvey shows that it is impossible to understand space independent of time. We can create completely different maps of relative locations by differentiating between distances measured in terms of cost, time, modal split, networks and topological relations, he writes. Furthermore, the standpoint of the observer plays a critical role, an idea that is also very present in Corner. The third, *relational concept of space,* is most often associated with Leibniz. This concept of space is embedded in or internal to process. Here it is impossible to distinguish space from time. The last notion implies the idea of internal relations; external influences are internalised in processes through

time. Measurement becomes more and more problematic once we come closer to the world of relational space-time. This last notion is the one Whitehead and Deleuze are interested in. Harvey's point is to use these three notions of space in the same field, that of the geographer. In that sense, as all three notions play an important role irrespective of their different ontologies.

Four thematic approaches; first, the "drift"

James Corner distinguishes the four thematic ways in which new practices of mapping are emerging in contemporary design and planning, each relating to different notions of time/space. The four thematic ways include: *drift, layering, game-board*, and *rhizome*. The first one, the drift (*dérive*), is related to the Situationist International (SI) activities in the 1950s and 1960s in Paris. The Situationist International was "established" (established being the wrong term for it since they rejected every form of establishment), in 1957, when eight delegates met in an obscure bar in Italy. Simon Sadler (1998, 4) writes:

> [...] *the delegates represented two key groups— the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, and the Lettrist International, a lite- rary group. A third group, the London Psycho- geographical Association was represented by its only known member, Ralph Rumney.*

This meeting was a rather fruitful conjugation of odd bedfellows, according to Sadler. The Lettrist International (1952-1957), dominated by Guy Debord, was inclined towards the minimal and conceptual, rather than the visual. The founder of the Imaginist Bauhaus (1954-1957), Asger Jorn, on the other hand, preferred a hands-on, expressionist approach to the production of art. The Lettrist International was urban, based in Paris, while the Imaginist Bauhaus was located

in the Italian provincial towns of Albisola and Alba. In September 1956, the Alba congress was held. Representatives from eight countries met to lay the foundations of their organisation. Gil Wolman was added to the editorial board of Eristica, the information bulletin of the Imaginist Bauhuas, and Asger Jorn became a board member of the Lettrist International (Knabb 1981).[3] The COBRA group (1948-1951) had a formative influence upon Situationism through the artist Constant. In Paris, Debord moved away from Lettrism's esoteric exploration of language into a more revolutionary urban endeavour. Sadler, in his book *The Situationist City*, deals with the early Situationist program and shows how the program changed from its origins in the Lettrist International and Imaginist Bauhaus, into their first World Congress of Free Artists in Alba, to the Situationist International proper which spread to various countries. Notably, none of the main players were designers or architects by profession. Their opponent was functionalism, which to their minds was played out and fused with the most static conservative doctrines like in Harvey's absolute space conception. The Situationists felt that social progress did not subsume the individual, but had to maximise his or her freedom and potential.

The drift is not just another way of microscopic attention to city life; we cannot strip it from its political content. Using it as another way to explore the city, as in many design studios, is against everything the Situationists stood for —the revolution of the working class and an overturning of power. The *dérive* entails playful, constructive behaviour and awareness of psy- cho-geographical effects, which completely distinguishes it from the classical notions of the journey and the stroll, Debord (1981, 50) wrote in 1981. The drift is characterised by its letting go, but at the same time by its opposite: the domination of psycho-geographical variations

by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities. Psycho-geography conveyed a desire for rational control over ever-greater domains of life, Tom McDonouch (2002) writes in his Introduction to his textbook on Debord and the Situationist International. Psycho-geography was a way to systematise, and to consciously organise what the Surrealists still experienced as merely random. Chance plays an important role, but the action of chance is conservative and progress is nothing other than breaking through a field where chance holds sway by creating new conditions more favourable to our purposes, Debord writes. However, Situationism was not alone with their critique on society and modernist planning. Indeed, COBRA, Jane Jacobs and Lewis Mumford, the British Independent Group, which met from 1952-1955 at the London-based Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), and the Smithsons all worked on comparable lines. *Potlach*, the journal of the Lettrist International introduced the nexus of ideas of which the drift (*dérive*) is only one. Sadler's book is organised around the five most important issues that were present in the Situationist's vocabulary—*psychogéograpie* (psycho-geography), *détournement* (diversion), *dérive* (drift), *situations* (situations), and *urbanisme unitaire* (unitary urbanism). *Détournement* was a way to negotiate Pop Art, for instance, Richard Hamilton's famous photo collage was opposed by Jorn's and Debord's *Fin de Copenhague* (*End of Copenhagen* 1957). *Détournement* (Internationale Situationiste #3 1959, 55)[4] is the reuse of pre-existing artistic elements in a new ensemble, and the two fundamental laws of *détournement* are the loss of importance of each detourned element and at the same time the organisation of a new meaning (Knabb 1981).

The important Situationist term "situation" is considered the concrete construction of temporary settings of life and their transformation into a higher passionate nature. The definition of "situations" was related to Debord's critique on the spectacle, which elevates sight to a special place once occupied by touch. The spectacle is in turn related to Karl Marx's commodity fetishism, where the perceptible world is replaced by a set of images that are superior to that world yet at the same time impose themselves as eminently perceptible (Debord, 1995, thesis 18 and 36). The spectacle is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image, writes Debord (thesis 34). Sight is the most abstract of the senses, the most easily deceived, and the most readily adaptable to present-day societies generalised abstraction. The idea is closely related to *unitary urbanism*, where the arts play an important role. Situations should be integrated in the composition of the complete environment. A new architecture should address the atmospheric effects of rooms, corridors, streets, and atmospheres linked to the behaviours they contain.

Ultimately, situations are more about emotionally moving situations, where we use all our senses, than about form. Unitary urbanism must take up the *détournement* of known forms of architecture and urbanism. *Détournement* was a strategy to create a society of pleasure instead of Stalinism; it wanted to use the productive forces in society to change the everyday life to a more festive or ludic way. Unitary urbanism also relates to the growing traffic congestion in Paris. Debord was fascinated by Le Corbusier's radical solutions, and at the same time rejected La Ville Radieuse. Unitary urbanism wants to dissolve the separations of work/leisure or public/private. Unitary urbanism is a "living critique", fuelled by all the tensions of daily life (Kotányi and Vaneigem 1981, No. 5). The car as the organisation of "universal isolation" is the major problem of modern cities. Debord speaks of "the dictatorship of the automobile", the car having left its mark on the landscape in the dominance

of freeways that bypass the old urban centres and promote an ever-greater dispersal (Debord, 1995, thesis 34).

The Situationist's solutions have a certain resemblance to what happened in Amsterdam's Nieuwmarkt in the early 1960s, where the newly proposed Metro line was fiercely opposed by Provo (an anarchist revolt group). The White Bicycle Plan[5] was supposed to solve Amsterdam's transportation problem. Constant Nieuwenhuys was among the core members of this group who attempted to think of radical solutions to the city. In 1965, his New Babylon project was presented in Provo's magazine in order to help Provo's struggle with the authorities and the empowerment of the people. Nieuwenhuys saw New Babylon as a kind of creative game, not so much a town planning experiment or a work of art. Constant's "principle of disorientation" was a deliberate attempt to confuse spatial hierarchy. His New Babylon directly confronted the dull and sterile environments he saw arising all around him. Old neighbourhoods had their streets degenerated into highways, he writes, and leisure was commercialised and adulterated by tourism (Nieuwenhuys 2002, 95 -101).[6] His idea was a covered city with a continuous spatial construction, elevated above the ground. All traffic would pass underneath; streets could be done away with entirely. The city of the future must be conceived as a continuous construction on pillars, he writes. Constant was interested in new ultra-light and insulating materials, expecting novel results from space-technology. In 1960 he resigned, accused of plagiarising the ideas of the Situationist International. For Debord and Kotányi, he was much too much on the side of the creative individual; apparently "the collective" did not leave much space for individual creation in the society for which the SI was striving. Although the Situationist's ideas were comparable to Provo, Team 10, Aldo van Eyck's, Giancarlo de De Carlo's, and

Shadrach Wood's ideas, they were architects, on the contrary, dealing with the incorporation of their ideas into concrete plans. The notion of play came from Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (1938). Archigram's proposals of Cedric Price and Littlewood, Fun Palace, and the Sin Centre by Michael Webb for London's Leicester Square all demonstrate how play can be commodified. Nevertheless, these ideas set New Babylon apart from Archigram; *creative play* and *fun* are not from the same tree.

Debord would cut up and reconfigure a standard map of Paris in a series of turns and detours.[7] The result reflected a subjective, street-level desire, an ambition to contest and to destabilise any fixed dominant image of the city by incorporating the nomadic, transitive, and shifting character of urban experience into spatial representation, as Corner explicates. Debord, Jorn, and the Smithson's alike, sought ways to address a social ecology, but the Situationists had difficulties getting on with "everyday" citizens, Sadler writes. They preferred to experiment on themselves, analysing the factors affecting their moods as they wandered their drift through the city. Debord made these maps after walking aimlessly around in the streets of Paris, recording his wanderings, while he also envisioned the progressive forces overtaking the streets of Paris. *Dérive* also meant reconnaissance for the revolutionising of power in the streets. Debord borrowed the idea of the drift from military tacticians, who defined it as a calculated action. Psycho-geography was merely the preparation, a reconnaissance for the day the city would be seized for real, Sadler (1998, 81) writes.

There are certain similarities with the way Michel de Certeau writes about a walk in the city. Truly, the operation of walking can be traced on city maps in such a way as to transcribe their paths. Yet these thick or thin curved lines refer, like words, to the absence of what has been passed by

(de Certeau 1984, 97). Surveys of routes miss what was, that is the act itself of passing by, he writes. The activity itself is transformed into points that draw a totalising and reversible line on the map. De Certeau compares the walking or wandering with what the speech act (*parole*) is to language. Like the Situationists, de Certeau attempted to return the map to everyday life, an intention we also find in Lefebvre's notion of lived space which corresponds with de Certeau's idea about the ordinary "practitioners" of the city, who "live down below", below the threshold at which visibility begins. For example, the homeless are invisible to the crowds who pass by them unseen (Graafland 2000). Characteristically, they walk, they are *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the "thicks and thins" of the urban "text". Similarly, the Situationists had considerable influence on Fluxus and Performance Art. Fluxus founder, George Maciunas, organised a series of Free Flux Tours around Manhattan in 1976, which included an Aleatoric Tour, a Subterranean Tour, and an Exotic Sites itinerary. The art object was the city itself.

Layering

The second procedure is layering, mostly used for large-scale urban projects. Layering involves the superimposition of various independent layers one upon the other to produce a heterogeneous surface. Famous examples are Bernard Tschumi's en Rem Koolhaas Parc de la Villette (1983), and Koolhaas Ville Nouvelle Melun-Sénart, a competition from 1987. Melun-Sénart was developed along the lines of "how to abstain from architecture". Instead of starting with the "this is what we want," as we always do in studios, Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) started with areas they wanted to protect. The rest they "surrendered to chaos." The systems of bands, or linear voids, were inscribed upon the site "like an enormous Chinese figure." OMA proposed to invest most of its energy in the protection of these bands, in maintaining their emptiness.

Instead of a city organised through its built form Melun-Sénart would be formless, according to OMA. The system of emptiness had to guarantee beauty, serenity, and accessibility in spite of its future architecture (Koolhaas et. al. 1998, 981). The bands defined an archipelago of residue; the islands, of different size and location, were the counter forms of the surrounding voids. As in Tschumi's park, the project dismantled the programmatic and logistical aspects into a series of islands, voids, and layers. OMA's La Villette plan is about a possible development, not the final design for a park. The design is characterised by programmatic indeterminacy and architectural specificity. What it tries to develop is a chain reaction of unprecedented events. The site is subdivided into a series of parallel bands that run east-west. The bands accommodate the major programmatic categories like the theme gardens, the playgrounds, and the discovery garden. The series of layers should guarantee a maximum permeability. Nature is treated in the same way as program. Excluded from the strips, we find the small-scale elements, kiosks, playgrounds, refreshment bars, and picnic areas. The Boulevard and the Promenade organise human access and circulation areas. The former intersects all the bands at right angles, and connects the major components of the park, the Science Museum, and the Baths in the north, and Music City and Grande Halle in the south.

In Tschumi's La Villette Plan, the concept of structure is challenged; the process of superimposition, permutation, and substitution, which governed the Parc de la Villette, could only lead to a radical questioning of the concept of structure, Tschumi writes (1985, 2). From the Classical era to the Modern Movement, from Durand to the Constructivists and beyond, the notion of an incoherent structure is simply without consideration, he continues. The plan leads to a radical questioning of structure, to its decentring, since the superimposition of three autonomous

(and coherent) structures (points, lines, surfaces) does not necessarily lead to a new, more complex, and verifiable structure. La Villette opens a field of contradictory and conflicting events that deny the idea of a pre-established coherence. Specifically, the layers are not mappings of an existing site or context, as James Corner explains, but mappings of the complexity of the intended program for the site. That the programme can intentionally be empty in OMA's Melun-Sénart plan is a strategy to protect green areas or routings through the "absolute space" of the existing landscape. When the different elements of the plan are overlaid, we get an amalgam of relationships. In both plans, this layering results in a complex fabric, without a centre, hierarchy, or single organising principle.

Emptiness is also an important aspect of Tschumi's La Villette plan. *La Case Vide*, as the Architectural Association (AA) box is called, takes its title from one specific drawing, plate no 9. The plate contains the very logic of the displacements and dis-structuring which informed the making of the Folio. A *case vide* is an empty slot or box in a chart or matrix, an unoccupied square in a chessboard, a blank compartment—the point of the unexpected, before data entered on the vertical axis can meet with data on the horizontal one, Tschumi explains. The matrix no longer holds the endless combinations, "derived from the key drawings of the project, each plate dislocates the structure of the sys-tems which compose it, transforming and reassembling them not so much in order to question laws of representation, but to contradict the apparent logic of the actual ordering device—divergence, deviation, deflection, dispersion, exorbitation." (ibid. 1985) What is actually built is no more than the ephemeral and temporary materialisation of concepts at one arbitrary moment in the conceptual chain in the development of architectural thought. The trees, the cinematic promenade, the galleria, the follies are real, but at the same time abstract notations,

a frozen image, a freeze-frame in a process of constant transformation. Although it is a park, it has virtually no relation to the public park of the nineteenth century. Anthony Vidler writes, it retains or formalises two aspects of historical gardens—that of the axis and the "*parcours,*" the straight line and the undulating line. The first is a characteristic of classicism, the latter of romanticism. They are both re-used, but as "empty signs," as Vidler writes (ibid., 20-21):

> *The three routes' of La Villette—the aerial (the covered, intersecting axes of the raised bridge), the terrestrial (the winding path joining the philosophic gardens of the meandering twentieth-century flâneur), and the aqueos (the old commercial canal)—are no longer initiatory or evocative of initiation. They are simply three routes, through and out of the park*

Reference to an ordering principle no longer exists, and there is not a series of expectations or hidden views. Rather, Tschumi has bound the park to the city, Vidler writes, not as a privileged realm, but to one another.

The same procedure is present in OMA's proposal, where we find a Promenade that delivers "surprise," and a Boulevard that gives "certainty." The Promenade in OMA's plan is complementary to the Boulevard, and is generated through the identification of significant cross-sections through the bands, where they create "sites within the site" (chess tables, tribunes, roller-skating surfaces, and the like). The Boulevard accommodates the 24-hour part of the program and the all-night facilities are located along it. Koolhaas describes it as a late twentieth century equivalent of the Arcades.

Game-board

The third strategy is that of the game-board. Game-boards are conceived as shared working

surfaces upon which various competing constituencies are invited to meet to work out their different claims on a contested territory. The game-board should facilitate the different spatial claims on the same territory to find a common ground while playing out various scenarios. The difference with layering is that in a game-board the actants are supposed to do the development, whereas the *urbanist* or *architect,* on the other hand, steps back from the design process to accommodate the different parties involved. Well known examples are Raoul Bunschoten's plan for Bucharest in Romania (1996), and MVRDV's Regionmaker and its successor the Space Fighter, developed in cooperation with the former Delft School of Design (DSD) (Maas, 2007). In both cases, cities are seen as dynamic entities where different players are involved and their "effects" stream through the system. CHORA's proposition addresses the situation of Bucharest as a whole, relating the larger context of this geomorphologic system to the various changes—political, social, and physical that affected the city (Bunschoten 2002, 398).

CHORA consisted of a small group of architects who have been associated with the AA in London. Its organisational form is something between an academic research institute, an urban planning office, and a city policy think tank that aims to research urban environments undergoing radical change. Bunschoten headed the group and used the term "chora" to refer to a threshold space between local and larger global conditions (ibid. 2002, 5). Global trends create "urban flotsam," things drift out of place and they form a "second skin" on the earth. In most cases, this second skin is not a planned urbanism and in many cases we cannot even speak of "urbanism." It is occurring in many Asian and Latin American cities and urban conglomerates.

Mike Davis shows that since 1970, the growth of slums everywhere in the South has outpaced urbanisation *per se* (Davis 2006, 17). To quote the urban planner Priscilla Connolly, he mentions that in Mexico City as much as sixty percent of the city's growth is the result of people, especially women, building their own dwellings on unserviced peripheral land. Another example is Sao Paulo, wherein 1990 alone, the population of the favelas grew at the rate of 16.4 percent per year. The same is happening in Asia and Africa. In Beijing, police authorities estimate that 200,000 unregistered rural migrants arrive each year, many of them crowded into illegal slums. In Karachi, the squatter population doubles every decade and Indian slums continue to grow 250 percent faster than the overall population. Of the 500,000 people who migrate to Delhi each year, it is estimated that 400,000 end up in slums. By 2015 India's capital will have a slum population of more than 10 million, Davis concludes (ibid., 18). In Africa, the situation is even more extreme. Africa's slums are growing at twice the speed of the continent's exploding cities. By 2015, black Africa will have 332 million slum-dwellers, a number that is expected to double every fifteen years. The "cities of the future," as Davis writes, are not made of glass and steel as envisioned by earlier generations of urbanists, but are "largely constructed out of crude brick, straw, recycled plastic, cement blocks, and scrap wood" (ibid. 2006, 19).

Like Corner, Bunschoten is interested in the performative aspects of mapping. Bunschoten writes: "The second skin of the earth is in flux. This dynamic character is the essential quality of cities. Things move, though sometimes very slowly." (Bunschoten 2002, 37) Frictions, new configurations, and singularities emerge (ibid.). Urban flotsam is about the manifestations of global influences on local environments. His interest is on modelling these influences, with the aim to develop scenarios. Bunschoten's Urban Flotsam is divided into four chapters, each having a methodological layer and a case study layer. The first chapter consists of these

"proto-urban conditions." It deals with seven walks accompanying the city planner of the city of Alexandrov, Russia, just after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, on a path that encounters a rapidly changing field of forces and events. The city is grasped by walking through it, very much in line with the earlier mentioned first strategy. "Walking is an act of touching upon the intertwining undulation of the landscape of the city and society" (ibid., 55). Indeed, De Certeau's footsteps are present in CHORA's procedure: "linking acts and footsteps, opening meanings and directions, these words operate in the name of an emptying-out and wearing away of their primary role...(becoming in turn) liberated spaces that can be occupied" (ibid., 75). Almost like a common manifesto from the Situationists and de Certeau, Bunschoten writes that "immersion in the city with new eyes means walking through it, entering its flux, encountering emergent phenomena, recognising them as manifestations of proto-urban conditions, sorting them into boxes" (ibid.). Yet, no urban revolution is implied as in the Situationists.

The second chapter of the book deals with the *Taschenwelt*: having entered a changing environment, how do you get involved? How do you play with the elements? *Taschenwelt* means "pocket world," a model that holds the dynamic properties of a life form and enables a more precise view of the complex reality. This notion is derived from Arno Schmidt and Claude Levi-Strauss, who describe it as a micro-world where reduction of scale reverses a situation. This "pocke t world" can be assessed and comprehended at a glance. Obviously, a similarity might be drawn with what Deleuze understands as "micro-politics" and *écriture-mineure* in Kafka (Deleuze and Guattari 1972, 30). The third chapter is about "taxonomy and unfolding." Can a given reality be retold in a different way? Can one insert new plots to create narratives that have the power to change? Chapter Four is about "liminal bodies."

Nevertheless, the question should answer how to realise these scenarios. "The engine of these encounters is the Liminal Body, a threshold device that brings together existing local components and potential immanent or global conditions. The Liminal Body invites certain urban components into its structure, links them with elements of other conditions. Liminality is a "topological issue" (Bunschoten 2002, 348). However, "liminal bodies" represents a key to the development of an action plan for Bunschoten. Urban design is not so much practiced as spatial composition, but as orchestrating the conditions around the game-board. The idea is to "stir the city," to negotiate interaction with other agents in the policy-making process. This strategy could lead to new policies in what Saskia Sassen calls in the case of Caracas "analytic borderlands," or "spaces that are constituted in terms of discontinuities and usually conceived of as mutually exclusive. In constituting them as analytic borderlands, discontinuities are given a terrain of operations rather than being reduced to a dividing line" (Sassen 2005, 83).

Cartographers and map historians have long been aware of tendencies in the content of their maps that they call "bias," "distortion," "deviance," or even the "abuse" of sound cartographic principles, J.B. Harley (1988, 287) writes. Yet little space in cartographic literature is devoted to the political implications of these terms according to Harley. The "bias" is mostly measured against the yardstick of "objectivity;" rather, his interest is in the deliberate distortions of the historical map and the "unconscious" distortions, the "silences" in the maps. His conclusion is remarkably informative—maps are pre-eminently a language of power, not of protest. Maps, as an "impersonal" type of knowledge tend to "de-socialise" the territory they represent, he writes. The abstract quality of the map, embodied as much in the lines of a fifteenth-century Ptolemaic projection as in the contemporary images of computer

cartography, lessens the burden of conscience about people in the landscape. Decisions about the exercise of power are removed from the realm of immediate face-to-face contacts (ibid., 303).

This problem of objectivity and exclusion of face-to-face contact is even stronger in the contemporary architectural and urban maps that are performative by nature. Bunschoten links the various cultural aspirations of each group to a physical space or territory, distinguishing local authorities who anchor conditions, and actors who participate with stated desires, and agents who have the power and capacity to make things happen. Importantly, however, is to look at "those who lack power, those who are disadvantaged, outsiders, discriminated minorities," for they can gain presence, Sassen writes, "vis-à-vis power and presence vis-à-vis each other" (Sassen 2005, 83). Another mapping technique might make this visible.

In principle, the possibility exists to link the different layers of the earlier discussed plan of La Villette to Bunschoten's "frames" to play out certain thematic conditions. Bunschoten's game board is quite different from the "derive" since in this case, the intellectual and his Marxist theory are responsible for the direction an intervention might go. The game-board player, in contrast, incorporates and engages the various imaginations of all the relevant parties, Corner (1999, 240) writes. In devising the map, the designer sets up the game-board to avoid the pre-figuration or predetermination of the outcome—basically a game of negotiation. Of course, this game playing is set apart from the Situationists ideas of an intellectual spearhead; the management of urban change is dependent on the interaction of parties and structures that need to be anchored in the physical environment, Bunschoten writes (2002, 45). With a reference to de Certeau, he writes that it is necessary to identify proto-urban conditions and local

authorities that anchor these conditions within existing institutions or places; as well as actors or participants with stated desires, and the agents necessary to develop the potential of growth in relation to the desires of actors. Where the Situationists wanted to change these institutions, and critically address the "stated desires," Bunschoten chose to work with the established institutions in a democratic way. Strategic and cultural planning involves scenarios that link economic and demographic changes to factors such as identity, culture, history, and collective memory. In Bunschoten's (2002, 47) words:

> *(In) a volatile environment moving towards a fully fledged democracy, large-scale urban transformations cannot be implemented without forms of planning and management that resemble game structures: new institutional structures that include radically different partners, agents and actors.*

In Eastern Europe, according to Bunschoten, an urgent need exists for exemplary studies that should aid local populations in their quests for direct action, direct democracy, self-determination, and self-organisation. CHORA wanted to contribute directly to the decision-making processes, to create models and prototypes for (other) Eastern European cities and towns, and for the urban-planning discipline. In that sense, he steps out of a purely academic world into the daily practices of design and planning.

In contrast, this aim is also the major difference with Tschumi's plan for La Villette. La Case Vide keeps a distance from its users, its symbolic representations, and the traditional garden design. In an interview with Alvin Boyarsky, Tschumi defines the plan as "a distorted reference to Modernism; it does not enter the canon of Modernism in the sense that it is already distanced from Modernism in many respects"

(Tschumi and Boyarsky 1985, 25). Tschumi sees the point grid as a way to organise frames, sequences, distortion, and cut-ups—procedures that come from montage techniques in film. The point grid that is about action and event, and yet it is not something to be discussed in a decision-making process. The point grid should fulfil two tasks: Tschumi's theoretical intentions, and the points as action and event, and an immediately readable image. Furthermore, the point grid has to communicate an "alternative representation of society and the contemporary nature of the metropolis to a disbelieving public," as Boyarsky argues during the interview (ibid.). This position is comparable to the Situationists. The La Villette plan was a competition and CHORA sought cooperation from the very beginning. This lack of initial cooperation left La Villette with a "communication" problem, as Boyarsky pointed out during the interview: "...the learned jury seems to have understood, but the layman, the press, and the bureaucracy who became the client didn't, so you were caught in a trap when the decision was announced. I'll bet you had to produce the imagery which you're living with now in quite a hurry" (ibid.). Tschumi's answer is that he considered that a form of meta-language would allow him to communicate. For him, architecture is not about a spatial illustration of theoretical or philosophical propositions at any one time; rather, it participates in them, accelerates them, and intensifies them (ibid.). The meta-language is architectural; it is the red of the follies, the abstraction of the cube, the line, and the plane. For Tschumi there is obviously "an implicit sympathy with Russian Constructivism, and although CHORA relates to different partners, agents, and actors, it uses a similar strategy—the game-board and its ingredients are not up for discussion either. The meta-language is in the hands of the designer, not the public."

Rhizome

The fourth strategy is that of the "rhizome." Corner describes their open-ended, indeterminate characteristics by referring to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's use of the concept. Corner rightfully stresses the notion of "milieu" from which the rhizome grows as an a-centred, non-hierarchical and expanding figure (of thought). Both Deleuze and Guattari had made an important distinction between a "map" and a "tracing" in their work *Mille Plateaux* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), a distinction that is relevant in this context of mapping. The map is connected to their rhizome, and the tracing is related to the tree structure. Tracings belong to hierarchical structures and orders. But the rhizome is certainly not a loose and disjointed field of everything. It holds together by a "plane of consistency," or a surface that structures the open-ended series of relationships. Although Corner considers the rhizome a strategy, it is first and foremost a theoretical concept used by Deleuze and Guattari in *Mille Plateaux*. This concept was also employed earlier in my book, *The Socius of Architecture (Graafland 2000)*. In Amsterdam's Westerdok, these dynamics of the past and present situation were captured with the notion of a "rhizome." Indeed, Amsterdam's inner city may be characterised as "Situationists' space" *par excellence*, precisely the opposite of sanitised modern space. The plan itself has no architectural connotation other than its land use, which explores the possibilities of a pedestrian archipelago where the strips have no other meaning than dimensional limit to the streets and the water. Amsterdam's inner city explores a theoretical "non-representability" in the urban scale, the design of which is about the experience of the sublime. Yet in a completely different way, the Situationists adopted an aesthetic experience. Potlach consistently recommended sources for the sublime, according to Sadler, but the Situationists' examples were all "picturesque"—

from Claude Lorrain's sea views, to Fernand Cheval's exotic palace he built in his back garden, to the Parc Monceau, and to Piranesi's Carceri. The "other sublime," as I use the term, is about abstraction and disappearance, which is directly comparable with what Ackbar Abbas (1997, 65) writes about Hong Kong cinema and colonial space.[9]

Realism vs figures of thought

In conclusion, we see that concepts like "the social", "activism", "social system", "participatory planning and design", and even "design" are never neutral. When observing developments that were never planned nor controlled, we should ask ourselves where this leaves design—whether architecture, urbanism, or social design. Should not we find new ways to think and act in order to address these most urgent questions? The answer should be a resounding "yes," without overestimating the capacities of design, however broad or specific. Gita Dewan Verma's controversial *Slumming India* (2002), an "almost Swiftian attack on the celebrity cult of urban NGO's," is one example that debunks improvements projects that fake success out of a civic disaster (Davis 2006, 78). Verma claims that "for more than a decade we have been celebrating a drawing" (Dewan Verma 2002, 35) where uncertainty looms based on a "design idea, that we are not sure will work because it has not yet been tested" (ibid., 5). This refers directly to what I mentioned in the opening of this text about medical sciences and design thinking. Urbanism and architecture at an institutional level relate to plans and designs, and seldom involve actual material practices in neighbourhoods or on city level. The danger of celebrating a drawing or concepts is always present. They are part and parcel of theoretical knowledge, different ontologies, and varying relations. The best we can do in education and research is to develop different conceptual frameworks as best as we can, whilst refraining from a mere "celebrating of a drawing." Because that is basically what we do in education (we assess drawings), nothing is built or executed. General discussions on the "core" or "the essence" of education in design schools lead, in my opinion, to a "nowhere-land." We need and require the plurality of "figures of thought."

Notes

1. See: Arie Graafland, *Versailles and the Mechanics of Power*, (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2003). p57.

2. See: Peter Meusburger and Hans Gebhardt in their introduction to the Hettner Lecture in Heidelberg, 2004.

3. See Potlach: Information Bulletin of the Lettrist International # 27, November 1956, in *Situationist International, Anthology*, The Alba Platform, pp14-15.

4. See: Detournement as Negation and Prelude, Internationale Situationiste # 3, December 1959, *Anthology*, p55

5. The White Bicycle Plan proposed to create bicycles for public use that cannot be locked. It stood as a symbol of simplicity as well as healthy living, in opposition to the automobile.

6. It was in June 1960 that Constant resigned from the collective. "While Constant elaborated the design and theory of his project for another 14 years, the relationship between the Situationists and architecture remained problematic on both sides", Mark Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon, The Hyper Architecture of Desire*, 010 Publishers (1998), p16.

7. See: Guy Debord and Asger Jorn, *Guide psychgéographique de Paris: discours sur les passions* de l'amour, 1956, screen printed map.).

8. An 'écriture mineure' as opposed to 'majeure', as in Kafka's work is not the literature of a limited language, but that of a minority using a great language. Deleuze and Guattari link this language to the condition of the Jews in Prague whose language was mostly blocked and made peripheral. They were living between the impossible choice of not writing at all, or in German which was not their language either and also not very common in Prague, or writing in a different way. Because of the limited space where this écriture mineure is practiced, almost everything is political. What happens in that language is put under a microscope. Pour une Littérature mineure, p30.

9. Abbas is arguing for a critical discourse on Hong Kong architecture and urban space, where the dominance of visuality is put into question, as in the case of the new Hong Kong cinema. The notion of disappearance he is arguing for does not connote a vanishing without a trace. It can go together very well with a concern for presence and projects of preservation. See also Rem Koolhaas, 'Imagining Nothingness', in *S,M,L,XL*, p199, with a similar idea.

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