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Dr Wael Salah Fahmi
Lecturer of architecture and Urban Design
Helwan University-Cairo
Visiting Research Fellow
Manchester University- UK
e-mail address: wael_fahmy@hotmail.com

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Reading of Post Modern Public Spaces As Layers Of Virtual Images and Real Events

The relationship between real and virtual spaces has produced a new urbanity, extending from post modernity, deconstructivism to super modernity. By creating virtual metaphors and mental maps of different spatial layers within post modern cities, public spaces are experienced as sequential images and overlapping layers of events as they emerge. An urban experiment is introduced that proposes a conflation of urban spaces mapped into fictional terrain of perceptive imagery and virtual reality. There is a need to deconstruct the contested post modern city, with the current paper aiming to examine the fragmented multi-layered nature of public spaces in an attempt to emphasize the nature and institutionalization of post modern spaces. This will try to unravel conflicting forces that when initially encountered resisted the subversive rhythms of deconstructivism that challenge the stable institutionalized construction of space.

Key words: virtual representation- mental map/images- events-deconstruction- post modern city

INTRODUCTION

Re-conceiving the Post modern City

The post modern city is experienced as a sequence of several images overlapping and evolving through different scales of space and time (Watson and Gibson 1995). Through the cognitive images of different layers and elements of spatiality, it is possible to perceive the disorder of post modern cities. A fruitful avenue of exploration may well lie in attempting to reveal the unconscious mental mapping and cognitive imaging that people use to construct the city. In so doing this paper attempts to deconstruct or reveal the dense intersection of various cultural practices within public spaces, regarded as offering social meanings whether these coalesce or compete. Such public spaces are both a primary means by which social networks are enacted, and a metaphor for the spatial relationships within city fabric.

Viewing the city through a deconstructive lens, it is possible to see the multiple manifestations of consumption of the post modern city fabric that enact a variety of (re)constructed identities (Fahmi and Howe 2000). The current paper introduces an urban experiment that proposes a (hypothological) city as an open framework of shared grounds/ownership. It includes built and unbuilt schemes as inserted within the fabric of the city, as influenced by history, human experience and contemporary culture. The article however examines the metaphors of space and being as manifest in the rhetoric of virtuality and materializes in real environments. It does so by looking firstly at precedents in the post modern built and media environment which have helped establish a discourse of immateriality upon which the rhetoric of virtuality depends; secondly, at the neo-futurist mechanisms which support the idea of an imaginative space in virtual environments; thirdly, at the appropriation of architectural metaphors that concretize and represent the spatial metaphor. The paper concludes by considering a number of conflicting forces that when initially encountered resisted the subversive rhythms of deconstructivism that challenge the normal stable institutionalized construction of space.

In the information-knowledge culture, existing urban order is being replaced by highly complex new networks. Therefore there is a need to deconstruct the contested (post)modern city, with the current paper aiming to examine the fragmented

multi-layered nature of public spaces in an attempt to emphasize the nature and institutionalization of post modern spaces. The examination of such fragmented urban patterns will try to unravel the contested nature of sequential images and overlapping layers of events as they emerge in people's daily interaction, with such social relations being mobilized through public spaces. Such spaces could nonetheless represent the (re) (de) construction of identities with new urban spaces signifying a focus for fragmentation and proliferation of social patterns which are contested and juxtaposed in post modern cities.

Since the post modern city is based on the concept of disintegration of real space in virtuality, a development of new ways of looking at spatiality is needed, with emphasis being made on the changing notion of expression of identity. This latter is however developing in all directions at the same time as a result of new technology, new media environment, and new economy. The disappearance of nation states and emergence of regions will eventually lead to a restructuring of frame of reference (Fahmi, 2000a). In understanding the role of contemporary urban public life it is essential to identify certain aspects which reflect the diversity of the post modern society. Proshansky, Ittelson and Rivlin (1970) emphasized the significance of freedom of choice within public spaces where aspects of privacy, territoriality and avoidance of sense of crowding prevail. If people are involved in the location, design and management of local public spaces they are inclined to negotiate with rules of social interaction, with boundaries of public and private life being blurred (Altman 1975). Following Lefebvre (1991), we see that spaces are conceived as material in the form of design of space, as symbolized in the media and folklore history, and as imagined in the minds of planners, designers and politicians.

Furthermore, Fadd and Jiron (1999) mentioned environmental qualities which involved the representation of various social, cultural and ethnic groups encompassed in the society, with each locating appropriate places. Therefore balancing people's spatial rights (Lynch 1981) or rights of action is a complex task, with public spaces being likely to have heterogeneous population performing different activities at different times. Urban public spaces can facilitate the creation of invisible networks of contacts which weave together the fabric of people-places relationships. On a cognitive level this assists in creating legible cities (Lynch 1960), with the ability to enhance images and memories of places, and to contribute to identities of people. These are components of place identity which can enrich urban life, and make the anonymous city comprehensible, familiar and manageable, whilst meeting users' needs.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Post modern Metaphors: Text and Collage

Harvey (1989) viewed collage/montage as the primary form of post modern discourse on spatiality, with the notion of the city as assemblage, bricolage, or pastiche, largely replacing that of the functional city of modernism (Rowe and Koetter, 1978). For architects and planners, this collage, consisting of three-dimensional space, time, and point of view, is no longer modeled after nature or the machine, but after cities of the past which Vidler has described as "the third typology" (Vidler 1978, cited in Ellin 1996).

Additionally, the text and collage metaphors have been central to the re-conception of culture (Geertz 1964, 1980), asserting that the world is constituted symbolically, that people organize various aspects of their lives into a coherent assemblage through the medium of culture. More recently, Boyer (1994) attempts to read the city as a "text", following Barthes' (1976 cited in Harvey 1989) earlier proposition that 'the city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language', and that 'architecture of signifiers with no signifieds, is considered a pure play of language'. Accordingly, with Derrida's (1976) work modeled after literary criticism with the (double) reading of the text and interpreting the meaning of culture, there is a need to read the city 'text' in terms of the rhythmic occurrence of events which (dis)connect public spaces.

According to Ellin (1996), post modern urbanism is experiencing a new urbanity in the information age where boundaries between reality and virtuality are blurring, nothing prevailing but discourses, texts, language games, images. Therefore urban designers' task has shifted, thus becoming the collection and assembling of elements in Foucault's museum of knowledge, with emphasis on creating legible cities and a sense of place, in reaction to postwar urban development. Boyer (1994) has pointed out that the postmodern aesthetic claimed to return to narrative forms, searching for an architectural language that communicates with the public, that manipulates simple combinations and patterns that are part of our collective memory . With the text remaining central, our environments grow increasingly hyper-real, with people generally exchanging their role as users and becoming readers (Bergum, 1990). This could be noted in the neo-modern or deconstructivists' work, such as Tschumi's follies at Paris' Parc de la Villette with its thematic garden for which Derrida teamed up with Eisenman to create Chora L Works (Derrida and Eisenman, 1997). Eisenman (1988a,b) has proposed

'architecture as writing and fiction not a simulation of history, reason, or reality but a representation of itself, of its own values and internal experience.

Imaginary Cities and the Urban Experience

Tiwari(2000) noted that, ' it is a fact that the legibility of our urban agglomerations is mostly due to the efficiency of graphic systems and that the built-systems have lost their autonomy and they do not carry symbolic weight anymore'. Legibility of the urban systems is stressed through conception, with the relation between people and the city going beyond perceptual recognition to more symbolic connotative level. However the notion of a monolithic city was supplanted by the city with multiple meanings and images (Lynch ,1960 and Geertz, 1973), and by the city as a theatre of memory (Ellin 1996).

Moreover Patton (1995) discusses the different senses in which post modern cities are 'imaginary' are written with respect to 'reality' in the work of Jameson (1984, 91), Raban (1974), Harvey (1989) and Young (1990). Whilst for some there is no distinction between the imaginary and the real, there is the possibility of reading and decoding post modern cities, in terms of production of signs, or urban images, with differing representational methods. We are dealing with imaginary cities; not simply the products of memory, but rather complex urban systems confused with narratives used to describe them (Calvino's (1979) city of signs). Elements of this city-imaginary have in turn affected the development of real cities, to the extent that architects and urban planners have operated between the recorded experience of city life and changes to its material space. According to Harvey's (1989) argument that whilst post modernity is an effect of the compression of space and time under late capitalism, it also existed as representation of the urban experience before being taken up by architects and planners to produce multifunctional hybrid spaces (Jameson 1991).

Urban life presents us with imaginary cities of signs which can nevertheless have real effects, whilst questioning the philosophical and political diagnoses of post modernity in which they occur. We do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace (Jameson 1991). This latest mutation in space, post modern hyperspace, has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world (Jameson 1988). Jameson's own account seeks to problematize these terms by locating them as effects of late capitalism, and to counter them by calling for a new aesthetic of cognitive mapping. David Harvey's (1989) diagnosis of post modernity is also based upon a representation of urban experience, where the city is a theatrical space with a series of stages upon which individuals could work their own distinctive magic while performing a multiplicity of roles and (re)constructing different identities.

Different from Harvey's account is Raban's (1974) refusal to draw a distinction between the imaginary city and its real conditions of existence. The city itself is 'soft', in the sense that it is a type of reality for which the boundary between imagination and fact is not absolute. However Raban writes:

"Cities, unlike villages and small towns, are plastic by nature. We mould them in our images: they, in their turn, shape us by the resistance they offer when we try to impose a personal form on them"…. And"…the city as we might imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate in maps and statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture." (Raban 1974: 10)

Raban's city is thus imaginary in a deconstructive sense, experienced by a subject which is the product of urban existence, which can neither fully identify with nor fully dissociate from the signs which constitute the city. Neither fully real nor entirely imaginary, both a dimension of the experience of city life and a metaphor of politics of difference, Young's (1990a,b) unoppressive city is a post modern object par excellence, undecidably modern and post modern, visible and invisible. While not simply heterotopic, referring to unrealized possibilities within the city, Young's normative ideal is nevertheless a differential space in which politics is possible and conflicts unavoidable. In addition, Boyer (1990) emphasized that the concept of ' Work here, play there, and live elsewhere', has given way to a 'work-play, live-work and play-live' heterotopic urban fabric.

Moreover Soja (1995) uses Foucault's concept of heterotopia, which are places 'outside of all places', even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. With his project to collapse modern history into post modern geography, Soja (1989) created in his work on Los Angeles what he called a re-balanced 'spatio-temporal narrative', where the heterotopias of Paris and Los Angeles (1789/1989) have been displayed/constructed as artworks . Nevertheless, the triumph of new urbanism has been represented, since the 1990s, by Los Angeles regarded as the future city, an interminable urbanized area with no coherent form, no hierarchical structure, no centre and no unity; a heteropolis, where

architecture seems to be characterized by an absence of distinguishing signs, by neutrality, particularly in relation to its context (Ibelings 1998).

More significantly is Grosz's (1995) identification of Plato's Chora; the space between being and becoming, or the 'space in which place is made possible', whilst constantly moving from the architectural and physical to the epistemological and ontological, thus suggesting ways in which people occupy space. Such Chora denotes the relationship between the determinate and indeterminate (Lechte cited inWatson and Gibson 1995), and is illustrated with reference to La Grande Arche at La Defense and (Tschumi's) follies in the Parc de la Villette, with committed intervention into established systems of knowledge and the use of writing as an enabling (and avowedly indeterminate) act .

Furthermore, in the modern world local/global tensions infuse all places signaling a loss of self-identity and revealing a collision of signs and images (Sassen 1991). A 'transnational imaginary' thus shapes local constructions of identity, giving the experience of place a phantasmagoric character wherein the global and local (glocal) become inextricably intertwined (Dovey 1999). Unlike the mediations of virtual space and telepresence, the immediacy of local places is regarded as more 'real' (Hannerz 1996), with the proliferation of the virtual through telephone, television and computer transforming the experience of place. The local place has a new significance as the arena of interaction which reconstructs 'habitats of meaning ' (in Bourdieu's (1998) terms 'habitus') .

After the explicitly defined spatiality of post modernism and deconstructivism, the ideal of boundless and undefined space started predominating an age of information and technology. This kind of super modernity cannot be defined outside social relations, history or identity (Ibelings 1998). Auge (1995) portrays the increasingly fragmented nature of 'super modernity' as a disappearance of place, suggesting that non-places are the real measure of our time, with these proliferating transit and informational spaces. Auge's (1995) non-places are identified as the placelessness of the super modern urban landscape, where increased mobility and telecommunications, the rise of new media, and the emergence of cyberspace are altering our experience of time, space and place identity.

Recent attempts to understand the development of cultural identity in late/post modern societies have been contradictory, ranging from Giddens, Beck to Lash (1994), and stressing on increased placelessness and reflexivity (in cognitive and aesthetic sense). Castells (1989) points out to increased place-bound identities and even tribalism as reactions to globalisation, whilst Kymalainen (2000) refers to the ethical aspects of experiencing cities referring to the questions of difference and other in urban environment, arguing for the abandonment of the city as a neutral space and instead following its textual signification**.**

"Here we are in Robert Venturi's [post]modern city, not just Las Vegas but any [post]modern city, a mediascape of office buildings and stores transformed by their corporate identities into the new language of consciousness: the sign molded in glass and light, splashed over with the insignia or characters of logos . . . Buildings are no longer mass and weight, stone and iron, but an array of sentences spelling out the consciousness of a city, what a city means when we enter it and use its services, consume its goods. The city's language of buildings and streets ,of glass and light, is a declaration of ideals . . . which the city achieves by transforming things into words, objects into signs, the dark of nature into neon abstraction and codes. . . the mediascape devours the literal materiality around it." (Christensen 1993, p.9-10)

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

Deconstructive Reading of Postmodern Public Spaces : Urban Fragments and Virtual Layers

Planning theory in the 20th century is dominated by a dualism between chaos and order ranging from classical, post modernity and deconstructivism, to late modernism and neo-classicism . Siljanoska (2000) presents the post modern vision of the city as abandoning the stable co-ordinates of place whilst basing itself on fragmentation and decomposition, a collage city or a simulative city. According to Bell and Haddour (2000), Thrift's (1996, 2000) visions and myths of the city (concerning globalization, homogenization, (in)authenticity and universalism) are, in fact, particularly instructive in terms of his discussion of three 'other cities' (the embodied, the learning, the unjust) as a way to 'begin to provide a sense of a city that is constantly changing, that does not necessarily hold together' . The city is regarded as 'a partially connected multiplicity which we can only ever know partially and from multiple places' . If we are to fully understand any particular city vision, then, we need to approach the city in a similarly polymorphous way, piecing it together, never losing sight of the 'magical' human practices that criss-cross its form, dancing and flickering over real and virtual space

Additionally, the media culture has put people into a space of 'total flow', with the juxtapositioning of their mental images

calling to attention a line of conflict (Jameson 1991). This is concerned with the nature of those other (unconscious) spaces, which have become invisible whilst attempting to map themselves into entirely different worlds. The deconstructive approach adopted in the current paper nevertheless explores the possibility of re-mapping a city through finding the flows of events, and through locating the hidden spaces in the "unconscious" of the city. Spaces emerge and disappear, they overlap and interpenetrate one another, with the virtual city being at once a transmutation of the known, whilst standing alongside and being interwoven into real urban life. However with information technology bringing various areas into proximity of one another, spaces constantly juxtapose themselves one against the other, similar to Lefebvre's image of interpenetrating spaces.

More significantly, the deconstructive turn has reinvigorated the forms of architectural and urban design discourse, as part of a long-standing quest for spaces of emancipation. With new forms of representation bringing new worlds into existence, a new social order , and experience of space, time and the self is coming about (King 1996). Nevertheless the potential of deconstructive design lies in the capacity of built form to challenge deeply held ideologies and belief systems, and to thereby create a space for the new (the shock value as coined by Dovey 1999). Deconstructivism involves an urge to overcome aesthetic borderlines and familiar structural principles, bringing us to the deconstructivists' demand for a change in visual habits, for the creation of a new aesthetic . Such deconstructivism points out new ways of doing things through experimentation, with the link between visionary architecture and electronic media calling to mind the coming gap between the architects of the real and virtual space. Cooke (1989) defines deconstructivism as 'the cognitive and experiential conflict between building as a physical entity, and time as a demolisher of entity, memory being a part of the broad category of time.'

According to Fahmi (2001) such approach to Derridean deconstruction has been subsequently applied by Eisenman, and Tschumi who both dismantle the conventions of architecture by using concepts derived from cinema, literary criticism, philosophy and psychoanalysis. In Cinegramme Folie at the Parc de La Villette, Tschumi (1988a, b) sets out his strategies to deconstruct what exists on site by analyzing critically the historical layers that preceded it, whilst adding other layers derived from other cities (a Derrida-like palimpsest). Additionally there is a need to search for an intermediary, an abstract system to mediate between the site and the constraints of the programme beyond the actual city. Like Derrida (1976), Tschumi wishes to dislocate, to de-regulate the idea of meaning as emerging from built form, as constantly 'deferred, differed, rendered irresolute' . Meaning will then be displaced by 'superimposition and transformations' to the elements from which the experiment is formed and these will always exceed any given formal configuration. 'Presence is postponed and closure deferred as each permutation or combination form shifts the image one step ahead.' (Tschumi 1988a)

More importantly the decoding of the texts, through which places are constructed and experienced, re-engages deconstruction analytically in the act of imagining cities and new urban installations in public spaces. This was apparent in Lebbeus Woods' (cited in Noever 1991, 97) visionary work which has deconstructively imagined post modern city in terms of urban objects which ignored laws of gravity. Forms hover and glide but also balance precariously between the optimistic metaphysics of the artist, which seeks to hold or force together again a disintegrated world (Figure 4). His work is considered with analogous comparison of virtual space and according to Noever (1991,97), '… sets up extreme problems in static and risky load-distributions, produces daring visual effects, suggests enigmatic purposes, and evokes a new sense of time space.' Woods (cited in Noever 1991,97) suggests that people can create their own world with reference to their collective memory, with the ability to draw upon their own experiences. This is in accordance with Saarikangos (2000) argument that multiple layers of spatial meaning have been connected with historically classified city spaces, their users and practices.

To grasp the nature of post modern cities' spatial metamorphosis, the proposed approach therefore conceptualizes different layers of events which constitute the city's spatial configuration. There is a need for reading and interpreting spatial and historical transformations. This will unravel the deliberately produced public images founded on material or symbolic backgrounds, depending on the history of the city and its future capacity to promote its public image . This could be symbolized by public spaces which are constructed and mediated, in discursive practices, in the continuity of the spatial perceptions, experiences and interpretations of everyday life. According to Levebvres' trialectics of perceived, conceived and lived spaces, there is a need to examine contested spaces which are transformed by the changing cultural practices, with narrative forms (myths and rituals) influencing the architectonics of space.

Of significance here is the combination of material and perceptual (de)constructive images of the city together with displacement of existing established structures and orders. The approach suggests multiple usage/imaging of public spaces for (de)construction of identities, relying on dense clustering and overlapping layers of spatial networks (Fahmi and Howe 2000). There is the need to consider both proliferation and fragmentation of production and consumption of public spaces

(Ungers and Veiths, 1997), with the post modern city being read as consisting of series of superimposed layers of programmes (functions, geometries, infrastructures, buildings) (Tschumi 1988a, b). These layers influence, modify and change the city's structural concept and produce fragmentary urban patterns, with historical and topographical factors generating contradictions and tensions (Fahmi 2000).

METHODS OF SPATIAL REPRESENTATION AND VIRTUAL EXPERIMENTATION

Pile and Thrift (2000) reviewed cardinal representational techniques through which cities are understood as a collection of fragments. Inevitably, however, the central paradox that imagining the city as a whole is a necessarily partial exercise, with these urban fragments being (re)sorted, (re)assembled and (re)connected, continually unsettling and disturbing established spatial orders. Conceiving the city as a patchwork of intersecting fields and overlapping fragments implies superimposition and interchange, with the need for techniques to help suture some of the elements of these splintered spaces. Three analytical and representational techniques are therefore adopted: diagrams (Eisenman 1999, and Castells 1989), montage (Benjamin 1979, 1985), and screens (Deleuze 1997). A staple of the experience of post modern cities is the city guidebook, where urban space is not only increasingly produced as a series of commodifiable fragments, but the city itself acts to fragment life, experience and space, to all intents and purposes, an inassimilable, irreducible and even incomprehensible entity. These fragments are also meshed together by networks of speed, light and power which constitute 'an invisible city' which Pile and Thrift (2000) have tried to provide a set of (intellectual) resources for working through from A to Z.

Re (De) Constructive Experimentation: Virtual Imaging and the Urban Incubator

In a world of hybridization and instant gratification, the city has a responsibility as the most tangible social framework to encapsulate goals of converting surface events into virtual images. Apart from the need for the city to pacify us with a vocabulary of order and permanence, there is a demand for an environment engaged into the qualities of contrasting scales, narratives, and emotions. Within a hypothetical reality, there is a need to psychologize space rupturing its spatial politics , triggering an interface with other expressive media.

Urban experimentation has recently developed in response to a rapidly changing world and contemporary urban issues, reflecting the rise of new technology (Boyarsky and Murphy, 1996). Accordingly the current experiment (s) however proposes tangible forms for a wider understanding of the space which lies somewhere in-between, and which mediates overlapping images, fields, networks (where built and unbuilt environments are revealed). The experiment(s) acknowledges the conflict between imagination and reality as a driving force for creating and structuring virtual spatial orders, thus operating on the boundaries where two worlds collide. This procedure aims at producing images of the city which are never geometrical nor predictable, but are rather collections, aggregations, accumulations of patched-up, extendable, overlapping and developing forms. The task is to materialize spatial paradox to accentuate the experienced qualities of design of the built environment.

UDERS Diagrams between Reality and Virtuality

The recent shift of urban knowledge to image diagrammatic technique, signifying an obsession with form, language and representation, has opened up the difference between form/content relationship and other plastic disciplines such as painting and sculpture, detaching form from its programmatic concerns, and displacing it from its relationship to function, meaning and aesthetics. Such technique lies between spatial and structural analysis and assumes a language founded on the articulation and contradiction of a series of dialectics (centre-periphery, vertical-horizontal, inside-outside, solid-void, point-plane). There is an attempt to replace the neutral, homogenous conception of modernist space with the post modernist figuration of form as a theatrical construction that is highly orchestrated through relations and instructions, and subjected to functions of (trans)forming, (in)forming and (per)forming (Eisenman 1999).

Furthermore Eisenman's (1999) diagrammatic method manages to overcome the typical visual experience replacing it by an emotional and physical body involvement/destabilization. Drawing upon Eisenman's project Moving Arrows, Eros and other Errors (or the Romeo and Juliet project for Venice Biennale 1985) the experiment uses public spaces as a place to rewrite history, introducing rhetorical topics of excavation, textual , dis-simulation, fiction, anti-memory, representation, figuration. Methods of layering, scaling, superimposition, self-similarity and scale-specificity are relating to its own being. This has produced a fractal representation of the built environment, with literary narrative being used by Eisenman (1988a,b) to dramatize the meeting of the 'fictional' and the 'real'.

Nevertheless a diagram is not only an explanation, but also acts as an intermediary in the process of generation of real

space and time. Unlike hierarchical and static characteristics of the (modernist) structure, an image diagram forms unstable physical systems, conceived both as structure and something resisting structure. Diagrams, which constitute an explanatory abstraction manipulated as both a discipline and a social project, are regarded as including relative points of creativity, change and resistance to the designated building (or structure), in the form of forces appearing as superimposed images.

In response to development in diagrammatic techniques, a design research laboratory was therefore set up concerned with invigorating urban imaging within public spaces, proposing new spatial configurations and representations as related to the emerging information culture and corresponding social shifts and cultural turn (Fahmi and Howe 2001). The Urban Design Experimental Research Studio (UDERS) aims at developing diagrammatic techniques through the creation of alternative forms of architectural production and spatial representation. An experimental working method was adopted to enable visualization of design discourse as a representation of a set of forces which resist the subversive rhythms of deconstructivism, against the stable institutionalized construction of spaces. UDERS attempts to deconstruct the basic notion of design programming and with more experimentation with spatial syntactic (geometries) and analogies (visual), whilst exploring people's cognitive mechanisms.

Moreover, UDERS diagrams offer experimental interfaces for intervening in complex urban processes within emerging networked environment. The aim, however, is not to develop advanced tools for the design of (un)built environments, but to create events through which it becomes possible to rethink urban systems. UDERS diagrams challenge the potentials that digital technologies might offer towards connective, participatory models of planning processes and of public agency. When diagrammatically analyzing urban schemes within the city, built environment is not presented as form or structure but rather as programmes. The emergence of a visionary world is precisely what the diagram seeks, with built environment professionals acting as channellers of information and with such diagrams providing means for real and (virtual) opportunities of experimentation (Fahmi 2000).

UDERS diagrams' capacity are therefore explored for refreshing 'ways of seeing' through the design of imaginative virtual environments involving metaphorical (re)(de)construction of space as well as philosophical texts and cognitive codes, with visual elements being regarded as semi-transparent and translucent. According to Davies (1998) the medium of "imaginative virtualization" of the (hypothological) city has intriguing potential as an arena for (re)(de)constructing metaphors about our existential being-in-the-world and for exploring consciousness as it is experienced subjectively. Such environments can provide a new kind of 'place', through which our minds may float among three-dimensionally virtual forms in a paradoxical combination of the ephemerally immaterial with what is perceived and bodily felt to be real.

Stage One: Collages and Fragments of Virtual Images of Public Spaces

A deconstructive reading is proposed of a city conceptualized as intermediary (in-between) public spaces, with adjacencies to those topological conditions that normally accommodate work, home and institutions. Similar to Tschumi's event city (1994) and Coates' ecstacity (2000), this is a hypothological city of crossed scales, dissolved boundaries engendering frameworks of place, behaviour and memory. This is a conflation of existing cities, with public spaces being mapped into fictional terrain of perceptive imagery and virtual reality, resulting in an apparently chaotic cultural system, where street patterns overlap and interlock with landmark buildings, all appearing in unexpected locations. However Figure 1 indicates UDERS methods of virtual (re)(de)constructed imaging of public spaces (in terms of cutting /pasting /inserting /shifting /rotating /shuffling /layering/overlapping and superimposing urban fragments), within the 'hypothological city' .

Similar to Benjamin 's (1985) work the virtual images signify ' travel souvenirs' which are fractured, then reconstructed, as descriptive fragments, brought back from many different places, whilst not providing a rationale for our evanescent images. This stage of the experiment pulls together a spatial narration evoking journeys to other cities, and following on with Benjamin's (1985) disconnected travel tales. By placing these 'postcards from another place' side by side, the experiment is also alluding to, or digging into, the nature of post modernity and spatiality, with each fragment being torn from its surrounds to provide an alternative context. The placing of these histories side by side is revealing, as it is in the juxtaposition of ancient statues and modern monuments, where relics take on new meanings in the post modern city. Historical monuments take their place within the fabric of post modern city, with its shopping malls, railway stations, and traffic regulations. These juxtapositions are a montage of urban images, meant to be read simultaneously, revealing the discontinuous nature of space, with its souvenirs and its myriad connections to other places. Finally the experiment aims at achieving Benjamin's (1985) goal, however, to awaken history, by placing these images together, to make the connection between them, and to establish a relationship that changes their meanings. In accordance with Benjamin (1985), the experiment attempts to set in motion a chain of thoughts that would recuperate the ruins and fragments of the post modern city and would reassemble them into something that is genuinely new and unimaginable.

While Castells' (1989) enterprise is to describe the underlying structural principle that allows a complete interpretation of everything that is going on in the city, Benjamin (1985) hopes to build up from the fragments a different picture of the city, through the flow and distribution of images. This could be noted in Tschumi's follies at Parc de La Villette, where cinematography was exploited to offer new perspective on the city, by bringing many images into sharp juxtaposition, by being able to establish connections between apparently disconnected elements, and by using multi-media to capture the urban experience.

Stage Two : Virtual (Imaginary) Installations within Public Spaces

Urban installations within public spaces are introduced, including built environment and UDERS (conceptual) image diagrams as inserted within or superimposed on the fabric of the hypothological city, these being influenced by the collision of history, human experience and contemporary culture (Figure 2). Corresponding to Coates' (2000) series of possible urban interfaces (tuning in, locking on, letting go, cranking up, flipping out), each installation however presents the cliched images which advance real place, taking on this mediated space and anticipating a destination seen through the fragmented myths, movie locations or souvenirs. The experiment then casts the experiential tools to explore the city as an individual construct, considering the complex centripetal-centrifugal space which everybody experiences physically and perceptually.

One looks at space of the flaneur, as being subjected to contrasts of experience and scale, with these installations regarded as urban icons. Public spaces respond to events and initiatives to formulate hyper-spatial conditions which are multi-dimensional , multi-physical, flipping and compressing both virtual and real experiences (Baudrillard, 1993). Urban installations do not monumentalize established institutions of culture , corporate headquarters, commercial operations but rather explores new possibilities of urban life and human experience, weaving into existing fabric of the city and becoming a hidden city of entirely unknown purpose or meaning. Created spaces and inserted places could be regarded as stations, nodes where telecommunications equipment can be virtually installed. Such free spaces will be superimposed on existing buildings, as being connected by lines of communications, invisible electronic paths, with a new community being established and a network of thought and action being maintained by free individuals. Uncertainty prevails as new post modern spatiality emerges using a series of collage- images which investigate the free-space construction of the newly –hidden city through the meeting of both virtual and real worlds (Figure3).

Furthermore the two stages of the experiment intended to unsettle 'memory and context' by rejecting both 'contextualist' and 'continualist' approaches, and favouring conflict over synthesis, fragmentation over unity, madness and play over careful management. The experiment opens into prior images and earlier signs, representing a different and autonomous system (a text), presenting 'montage', which had been applied in Tschumi's Parc de La Villette and developed as part of film technique by Eisenstein . In 'montage' independent fragments may be juxtaposed thus permitting 'a multiplicity of combinations', together with repetitions, substitutions, and insertions. Nevertheless, the experiment has indicated that the notion of images has been changed by the multiplication of screens which offer an active means of grasping hold of the city. Architecture is thus replaced, as the prime means of shaping the city, by cinema, television and computers, a sense of sc(r)enic perspective, with these representations being products of particular notions of spatiality. How, then, might we consider the urban life of screens, once we no longer consider screens to be passive reflections of some more real reality ?

These screens are seen as indices of possibility, with their proliferation enriching our imaginative experience of cities, by producing psychic echoes and reverberations that enliven the senses. In actor-network theory, screens might be re-figured as nodes in expanded social networks, not just feeding the psychical world but having their own non-organic forms of existence. Deleuze's (1997) screens become a means of expressing affects of the city by placing images together, mirroring the way in which the city juxtaposes many different possibilities, emotions, sensations, and perceptions. They make these qualities into dialectical forces which are actualized in determinate space-times, geographical and historical milieus, and individual people's lives (Smith, 1992).

Stage Three: Perceptions of Virtuality in Public Spaces

Bachelard (1966) examined the transformative potential of 'real' environments and changing space of one's usual sensibilities, where one enters into communication with a space that is psychologically intriguing. According to Deikman's (1990),'...De-automatization (de-habituation) is here conceived as permitting the adult to attain a new, fresh perception of the world by freeing him from a stereotyped organization built up over the years and by allowing adult synthetic functions access to fresh materials. The general process of de-automatization would seem of great potential usefulness whenever it is desired to break free from an old pattern in order to achieve a new experience of the same stimulus or to open a perceptual

avenue to stimuli never experienced before' (cited in Davies (1998).

In order to explore such phenomenon, several 'zones of spatial intensities' were selected, where human and traffic movements, and information flows were distinguished and (de)constructed through UDERS diagram (Figure 4) . Whilst developing hypothological urban dynamics, users can deploy a series of virtual diagrams to examine their perception of space (as ranging from confirming, opposing, drifting, confusing, repulsing, organizing) (Figures 1, 2). Whether developing new processes or reacting to existing ones, the (de) constructed movements (Figure 4) are visualized in activated diagrams for groups of participants, where aesthetic and action-oriented interests occupy and re-appropriate urban sites. UDERS diagrams creates a topological cut through the heterogeneous assemblage of physical spaces, data environments, urban imaging, connective agencies, and individual experiences, forming a model for the complex way in which network topologies will have to be questioned (Figure 4).

However people's responses to UDERS diagrams (Figures 1,2,4), as gathered through narrative correspondence, and video interviews, have ranged from emotional intensity, euphoria to confusion and bewilderment. The experience of seeing and imagining through the virtual, along with the method's reliance on cognition and perception, caused many respondents to relinquish desire for active 'doing' in favour of contemplative 'being'. A substantial number of participants have reported such reactions as ; a feeling that they had indeed been somewhere else, in another "place"; losing track of time ; heightened awareness of their own sense of being; a deep sense of mind/body relaxation; and feeling of freedom as well as awareness of physical embodiment. After becoming accustomed to the virtual image diagrams (Figures 1,2,4), respondents started traveling around to compare reality with virtual images as much as possible in what appears to be an extension of everyday goal-oriented, action-based behaviour. After a while, however, instead of rushing, they slowed down, mesmerized by their own perceptions within the space, where attention seems to be directed towards the unusual sensations of floating and seeing through virtual.

An experiential context is thus produced, with emphasis on the medium's perception-refreshing potential where the familiar becomes the unusual, creating room for other modes of perception. Moreover, the experiment does not (re)construct the world as we habitually perceive it (space containing solid, static, and separate objects, with rigid distinctions between subject, object, figure and ground). Instead, the use of image diagrams and collage sketches leads to 'de-solidifying' things and dissolving spatial distinctions. Multiplicity of semi-transparent, three-dimensional forms as well as abstract foreground images combine to (de)construct perceptual shifting between figure and ground, near and far, inside and outside, with these evocative diagrams intensifying the cognitive process. These aspects act to amplify the embodied virtual and perceptual nature of the experience, which highlights the potential of the medium to de-habituate our sensibilities and which allows for a re-sensitization of the perception of being, whilst inviting further exploration.

CONCLUSION

Deconstructive Experimentation and Urban Imaging

Deconstruction challenges the normative conventions that have been applied to planning and urban design discourse, for it postulates that there can be no absolute certainty of rational logic, with words and symbols used to express inward thought having no absolute meaning. Comprehensive sense is fragmented into smaller particles, making the holistic vision ever harder to uphold, and attempting to (re)construct from the disintegrating world a whole, true, and essentially new world-view, with pure elementary forms and figures being given metaphysical charge. Some urban designers have brought a sense of uncertainty to their projects, downplaying the physical manifestation, to the point of uncertainty and discontinuity, particularly allowing the observer to discern/ construct/peel away meanings in a 'text'. Meaning is continuously deferred, with each layer being removed, and more uncertainty being revealed.

Therefore the current deconstructive procedure has provided potentials for flexibility and imageability to generate new dynamic forms of spaces, with urban fabric being opened up, morphology being changed, meanings being developed, and environment being redefined. According to Fahmi (2000) urban design discourse addresses built forms as fixed and static, with defined boundaries and streets, and a contextual fit between urban fabric and built environment, whilst deconstructive procedure creates transparent, changing and virtual forms. There is a continuous tension and contrast within urban fabric, with disruptive and indeterminate spatial patterns. Added layers of history are superimposed, with fabric being opened and randomness being valued. Whilst streets are regarded as venues, public spaces are unbounded, open, and transparent (Fahmi and Howe 2000). However the experimental procedure has allowed for (re)(de)construction of public spaces, disrupting its meaning, whilst identifying the relationship between cognitive imaging and virtual forms. There is a need to read deconstructively such internal struggle between deconstruction of institution of space and institutionalization of

spatial deconstruction, a resistance that would provide more incentive for further deconstruction (Wigley 1995), ranging from visionary architecture (Thomsen 1994), to electronic agora and virtual spaces (Graham and Marvin 1996).

More significantly, deconstructive experimentation has dealt with urban images, considered the natural extension of virtual metaphysical forms as mediatecture (Riewoldt 1997, Mitchell 1996) , and mediascape (Christensen 1993). Urban images or architecture of images (as coined by Bermudez 1995), offer multiple and continuously changing interfaces that transcended the nature of the post modern and its physicality by offering built forms of multi-dimensional characters, with virtual layers. The immediateness and multiplicity of these (hyper) environments challenge the traditional concepts of presence, distance, and time, whilst delivering an architecture of singular simultaneity, that is an architectural version of Auge's 'non-place' where anything and everything is (re)present(ed) at least in theory. Urban images can be seen as both the celebration and critique of the media/information society . By importing, sustaining, and 'splashing' virtuality (e.g. art work, cinema, daily news, environmental scenes, video-games, virtual worlds) onto the real world, urban images would emphasize the power of information and cyberspace over matter and reality , as well as recognize the difficulty that people find in realizing, believing, and visualizing the abstract and immaterial world shaping society's institutions and personal lives (Pile 1996).

Urban images are therefore the natural symbiotic result of the new material and information needs of our environments, with hybrid interface between electronic media (broadcast or wired) and built media (encoded in the urban environment). Although media may conjure up almost anything into presence, virtuality can only displace but not replace reality, whilst seeking to reaffirm the true meaning of being embodied. In turn this will invite a refocusing of spatial design, bringing together the material and the informational, the tectonic and the abstract, the real and the virtual.

The Future and the Experience of Virtuality

Heidegger (1977) raised such issues which are fundamentally ontological, dealing with the 'being' of being human as much as the being of technology (cited in Dyson 1998). Being as expressed, within the critiques of Western metaphysics, is a complex assignation which nevertheless argues the ontological status of virtuality. As a central metaphor within the notion of being, space enables the discourse to drift between reality and mythical spaces, between the space of the screen, and the space of the imagination. The power of space however lies in the possibilities it implies in terms of immersion, habitation, being-there, unmediated presence. Without space there can be no concept of presence within an environment, nor can there be the possibility for authenticity that 'being-in-the-world' allows. As based on appeals to ontology rather than epistemology, to authentic being rather than mediated seeing, virtuality rhetorically expands ever outwards, encompassing an infinity of spaces, times, mythologies, and modes of transcendence, whilst closing in on the individually appropriating inner space . There is a need to revisit the post modern subject, where corporeality and environment has been literally infiltrated by cyberspace, which is repositioned as the locus of techno-institutional forces, pushing and pulling to achieve maximal efficiencies.

Furthermore virtuality is considered a psychological mechanism and cognitive adaptation in a less 'user-friendly' living environment, with imaginative space being used as a medium for 'bringing forth' or manifesting abstract ideas into the realm of virtual place so that they can be physically explored and lived in real events (This process was mentioned by Heidegger in relation to a Greek form of techne 'poiesis' , associated with a "bringing-forth" or 'revealing' into presence). Zelner (1999) illustrated that in the popular cultural (re)(de) construction of the virtual and the real, whether in literature or film, everyday experience is mirrored in another reality, between the virtual urbanity of the information machine and the actual urbanity of the city. Despite being a philosophical concept , the virtual is not an ideal, the utopia, but a bundle of dormant forces awaiting actualization. Nevertheless the virtual is real but not actual, ideal but never abstract. Indeed, the two sides of this purported dialectic, the real-actual and the virtual-imaginary are existing not side by side but through and across each other. In our cities, there already exists demonstration of the links between the real and the virtual, calling into play the possibility of a coterminous merging of very real city of bricks and a conceptually experienced 'city of bits ' (Mitchell 1996).

The notion of real spaces enriched by a virtual logic has existed since the seventeenth century, with the shift between the doubled worlds of the real-actual and the virtual-potential beginning to present itself. Whether 'hypersurface', with investigations into a topology of relational, mediated human , or trans-architecture in terms of turning-inside-out of cyberspace, these experimental forms promise to occupy the coterminous territories of the real and the virtual. In them, we may begin to experience a world no longer divided by virtuality, but one made rich with spaces of animated potentials and realities. There are organizing metaphors which make virtual environments places to be, concerned with being elsewhere and being 'other' in an evolutionary, in the same powerful conflation of real space and simulation, of real life and virtuality.

Virtuality with its emphasis on the future re-enacts the nihilistic logic of early futurism. Since one cannot be in the future, one cannot comfortably be in the fiction that is the hypothological space. Attempting to do so is like attempting to inhabit any dream or vision. And if the present is already lacking, the future is represented as already spent, an impossible space. With its cartoon-like simplicity and graphic representation, the virtual environment is simply another icon, a piece of signage, for the brutally alluring 'there' that the dream of the future is, and in which, by definition, one cannot be.

Figures

(presented as links on presentation platform)

Figure 1

Collages Of Virtual Images Of Public Spaces

Stage A (Figure1-A)

a. Cutting and Pasting Fragmented Elements (Particles)

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image41.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image42.jpg

b. Insertion of Urban Elements in Different Contexts

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image4TK.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image33.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image31.jpg

Stage B (Figure 1-B)

a. Overlaying and Shifting Buildings and Shuffling Backgrounds

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image29.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image30.jpg

b. Tracing Events and Shuffling Images in Motion

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image24.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image25.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image26.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image27.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image46.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image47.jpg

Stage C (Figure 1-C)

- **Layering and Overlapping Images**

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image7.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image34.jpg

Stage D (Figure 1-D)

- **Presentation of Original (Real) and De(Re)constructed (Virtual) Images (tracing similarities in urban elements and landscape across various cultural contexts (public spaces within different cities).**

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image44.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image45.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image50.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image37.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image49.jpg

Stage E (Figure 1-E)

- **Further Insertion of Newly Created (Hypothological) Images**
- **Presentation as (Real) Sequential Images- (Perceived) Fragmented Images- Virtual(Re)(De)constructed Images**

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe./isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image56.jpg

Figure 2

Urban Installations within Public Spaces

a. **Imaginary Virtual Installations within (Real) Public Spaces - Spatial Insertion**

Stage One

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image13.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image14.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image15.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image16.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image17.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image18.jpg

b.   Imaginary Virtual Installations within (Real) Public Spaces - Spatial Insertion

Stage Two

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image11.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image12.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image1QN.jpg

http://www.isl.unkarlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image20.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image8.jpg

c.   Virtual Installations within (Virtual) Public Spaces- Diagrammatic Representation

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image10.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image19.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image9.jpg

Figure 3

LEBBEUS WOODS - Visionary Deconstructivism

BERLIN FREE ZONE

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image21.jpg

UNDERGROUND BERLIN

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image22.jpg

AERIAL PARIS

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image23.jpg

Figure 4

Diagrams of Public Spaces (Deconstructed by Urban Movements and Spatial Dynamics)

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image55.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image35.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image36.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image51.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image52.jpg

http://www.isl.uni-karlsruhe.de/isocarp/pres/cs01_0234/Image53.jpg

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