

The City of Interface: Reading the spatial mechanisms and the new city

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Abstract

The Dispo-za-tif - PhD project - uses; an 'archaeological' configurative analysis approach to expose hidden combinatory syntaxes/structures/mechanisms and relations (topological positions), in order to lay bare the effects of 'productive space' as part of urban (trans)formative effects and urban transformations on the whole. By questioning these effects, issues are raised at the type of configurative analysis techniques, useful in exposing hidden (process-driven) mechanisms. From previous understandings, classifications and analysis, the built environment's theoretical models, were based on distanced observational practices, in which the built fabric was 'deconstructed' and understood on pure typological and or singular architectural notions. In turn, this 'distanced/Zenith' (Boeri term) approach generated models of settlement, functional hierarchies and orders, under banners that are no longer current with urban reality, such as neglecting the explanations of 'process' within itself.

Only by moving away from this 'distanced' view, is a new observational field possible to include all processes responsible for transformations, irrespective of the centre- peripheral notions, scale or local-global structures within.

Through principles derived from the Foucaultian notion of Archaeology, patterns and compositional structures are exposed from a perspective of surveying, notation, process collection, diagramming and 'relational drawings' to establish the topological relationships that embodies structural realities produced by the material practice of the individual and society (social economical, political).

An empirical investigation (GIS, CAD, Aerial surveillance) on urban morphological form is required to establish the formal aspects of the city at first (object, networks, used and unused urban plots). Followed by an inquiry into the processes (images, interviews and the 'topological distances', to establish the mechanisms that effect the ways/degree in which the combinatory elements relate (e.g.: scalar, streetscapes, individual actions and cross connections, space syntax, 'interfaces'). Positioning of new frameworks, hypothesising, and naming of effects would assist in the classification of the nature or character of the urban 'productive space' (Read), and henceforth address the driving force behind urban transformations.

The PhD working project takes into account 'European' and 'Afropean' (South Africa) urban fields and relates both samples to a set framework. This method of 'reading' the environment (analysis, visualization and syntactical representation) could then be applied to the configurative analysis of other urban samples, especially those of great social and economical diversity. It is intended to compile the sets of knowledge into an atlas explaining the processes, representing the differences in spatiality, within different environments.