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The plan: a spontaneous and sustainable mark

Le tracé, marque spontanée et durable

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Summary: The city is produced by drawing, which is a throw through the plan accumulation of knowledge. The plan does not lack cultural context. There is a contextual content in the container of the draw, what offers a continuity of the surveyed contexts which is less and less met in the urban treatment, more disconnected. The sustainable development is to take hold again contexts.

Résumé : La ville naît du dessin, qui est une accumulation de savoir projetée à travers le tracé, lequel n'est pas dénué de contexte culturel. Il y a un contenu contextuel dans le contenant du trait, ce qui offre une continuité des contextes arpentés qui se retrouve de moins en moins dans le traitement urbain, davantage décousu. Le développement durable, c'est se ressaisir des contextes.

Keywords: plan, line, context, haptics, memory, spontaneity.

Mots-clés : tracé, ligne, contexte, haptique, mémoire, spontanéité.

Urban, suburban spreading, division into sectors... are "monsters" indicated by those who make the city and this in the name of the democratization (the signs of a participative democracy in Europe are attested within the urban dialogues: UBA in Germany).

Maybe, nowadays, supplying answers adapted to variety of our cities is more necessary than comparing models of spaces between them. The modern city shows certainly a failure as regards the connections between the architecture and the urbanism. (Invention of a very sophisticated and individualized architecture, absence of intermediaries of investment on public spaces).

I suggest thinking about certain necessities of relations, asserted formerly by the city, and become less evident. I shall take the example of the association between the functionality and theater. The plan¹ of the city and the drawing of the architect always joined thanks to the meetings between the individuals within cities. Plans and lines placed the run-ups of our bodies in the geometrical. For this, they were tools guarantors of a human memory. The ephemeral and the local were thus bound with the universal.

The question of the ephemeral taps us today. I take the example of more and more common projects proposing the investment of said spaces "intermediaries": I can quote the example of these places between the place of residence and the street. We see them in Japan, in Brazil (traditionally), as in some projects of the Grand Paris.

These will mark a new worry about links between areas and means to be found to invest this caesura between private and public places. This text does not propose new solutions, but reminds the inscription of the plan in the town planning, and the idea of line within the common areas.

It tries to evoke the paradox of the short-lived in the long-lasting city.

1) Observations on the feeling of the unity.

I often wonder if the town planning of our cities does not evade too quickly the implicit narrative dimensions which are on the base of any spatial device. While I am held within a landscape, I move between different points of view (imaginary and practicable since a concrete knowledge of places). Since this capacity, I can share a place, because I take under consideration the share of identities.

If I take the example of a place which I cross, I live in it since the unity which it represents, through which I conceive the hypothesis that everyone can find there a meaning.

An incoherent immediacy is not enough for me, a parcel of land, which does not depend on the unitary appreciation of a landscape.

Any collective understanding has narrative contents.

The points of the map of a territory have to be joinable; they must not exclude each other since every habitation. So it is rather a whole, and since it a symbolic sharing is made possible.

Lessing distinguishes about the painting an organic modality (of the presenting and of the seeing), which articulates a matter next to another one, and a poetic modality, which considers the order of succession of matters, a matter after another one.

I reason thus: if it is true that painting and poetry, in their imitations, make use of entirely different media of expression, or signs – the first, namely, of form and colour in space, the second of articulated sounds in time; – if these signs indisputably require a suitable relation to the thing betokened, then it is clear, that signs arranged near to one another, can only express objects, of which the wholes or parts exist near one another; while consecutive signs can only express objects, of which the wholes or parts are themselves consecutive.

Objects, whose wholes or parts exist near one another, are called bodies. Consequently, bodies, with their visible properties, are the peculiar objects of painting.

Objects, whose wholes or parts are consecutive, are called actions. Consequently, actions are the peculiar subject of poetry. (Lessing, 1853, p.101)

¹ Note on the translation: the word 'plan' is for the French 'tracé', the word 'draw' for the French 'trait'.

An architecture which places objects and bodies one next to the other may be said organic; an architecture which articulates temporalities and successions between matters is closer to a symbolic, cosmogonical, or poetic, order. (Let us think of the Arabic architecture of Alhambra in Grenada, Spain. Let us remember maps of Leonardo da Vinci, in which the sight in oblique translates a relation between a physical crossing of the territory and a poetic-symbolic crossing of the territory.)

I choose to hold these observations about the urban and landscaped recognition. A space opens on the different present successions, not on situations placed one next to the other.

In other words, the conditions of appreciation of the frames of temporality must be accessible to everyone who lives here, without encroachment or threat of the one upon others. (An example is the skilful and playful dimension of the architecture which claims Le Corbusier).

2) The power of the haptic perception.

The difficulty envisaging the idea of spaciousness results from the character multi-leveled of the perception and of human needs.

For example, I cannot observe the fact of living without evoking the theatrical motive, which is implicit: we have an address because we find within places the possibilities of establishing our theaters there.

Architecture does not separate theater and functionality.

While the traditional city (ancient, for example) contains the device of the theater, the modern city is inseparable of the idea of projection and cinema. Therefore, a more internal space is thrown on the urban and landscaped unity. The scales of the city and the framings send back to more mental marks. The technology makes our gaze more precise and more rational, and makes them taken within more and more material and individualized cultural marks.

I wish to observe openings, closings and impounding of territories since the exposure of the human being and his attachments within the city.

Two analyses invite me to approach very concretely this value of the exposure. The first one is made by the French art historian and philosopher Hubert Damisch, and the second one by the American sociologist Richard Sennett.

Hubert Damisch takes under consideration a capacity of delight and capture since the device of showcase. An exhibition proceeds of a hierarchy of presentation, from the human being captivated to the one captive or captivating (for a woman). The showcase, in the fact that it participates of a motive where movements and actions can be cut and exposed again, plays with the limits of our own capacities of distinction or empathy: I am suddenly touched, as marked since possibilities and impossibilities of contact, from where appear effects of fascination, splitting and mirror. The showcase inaugurates new contacts since the haptic intimacy of touches (Damisch, 2004, p.68-69).

Richard Sennett replaces the touch as the center and the generator of the movement in human beings (Sennett, 1992). Human being moves when he touches; thus this capacity of action is a fundamental and premier link, a necessity to remain and move. Our cities must be considered since a history of these different contacts which the human being establishes with his environment. A first report comes from the avoidance to register the marks of borders and differences within a generic city, become unlimited, without particular tensions, monotonous, and without putting in show our borders. Nevertheless the show of the border participates in this idea of overtaking, place of a common conflict where everyone meets.

In his history of a city captured by the obsession of the touch, the sociologist analyzes the imprint of a Christian culture. He reviews various models.

The modern city, following the example of Mies Van der Rohe, proposes an ice-cold contact, a shape closes, which produces a fantastical and terrible encroachment of an almighty presence: the immobilizing moment of the 'to be seen' imposes upon the 'to be able to see'.

The contemporary western city asserts its incapacity to propose a theater of its conflicts, of its varieties, of powers. All which allows the recognition of common conflicts within the city is repressed, strengthening the divisions between the public and the private places. Nevertheless the city shows every day its failure since an absolutist, apathetic and generic regularization. The absences accumulated of possibilities of contact exclude definitively spaces, again since this treason.

3) Memory, image and urbanity.

This Richard Sennett's last proposition is not maybe forgotten by the cinema: recently, the cartoon *Waltz with Bashir* (Folman, 2008) convinced me of it.

The central figure remembers himself an image, that of the city under the crashes of the war, the explosions, the "pyrotechnicians" fires where the vision going from yellow browns to the frontal and deep black invades the spectator since this truth that the city is also the sharing and the exhibition of the death: while a rain of splinters explode at night above a city, three military companions appear from the sea and approach this rain.

The director deliberately seems to have put within this recurring nightmare for the central figure, the motives for a terrible fascination which holds us and asks us especially to hold on: this image, with its colors, contains a forgotten truth.

The character will find besides the reasons of its neurosis.

Sublime image of the city, of a city merged with one of its symbolisms, a victory on the individual death. The city registers the possibility of the sharing of the death under a shape of proclamation where even nightmares, I would even say especially nightmares, are shared.

So, this modern city, carnivorous and nevertheless beautiful city, which explodes of beauties with the cinema of Murnau, with George Grosz's paintings, with aerial panoramas, surrounded between skies and lands, being afraid of an ethereal space in Nick Ray's movies, with John Cassavetes' family universes or facetious confusions in Tim Burton's movies.

If the possibility of memory was the object of a cinema, that of Chris Marker, of Alain Resnais, who both investigate the necessary presences and the unforgivable absences of our societies, the question of the images as symbols and the question of their memorial manners proceed of an eclipse by the city.

Nevertheless, the ambition of memory establishes the plan of the city.

We find again the question of the body and its exposure, that is to say a relation between images and architecture. More exactly, we see there at work the relations between the perceptions and the images (Sitte, 2006: about the memory of the draw).

Nowadays, the architecture and urbanism historian Bernard Gauthiez envisages the spatial partition as one of the objects-guards of the memory of our territories.

Before reviewing the discernible elements on a plan, it remains to enlighten a major difficulty, a source of numerous errors. It consists in mechanisms of the fact that Pierre Lavedan called the obstinacy of the plan, and that I prefer to name the memory of the fragmented, of which we saw that it could be total. Without this effect of memory, the introductory hypothesis would be groundless. So that forms are passed on, mechanisms of preservation have to be at work; they concern, for what interests us, the limits of the plots of land, and the buildings. The fragmented limits can be divided into two categories. The first one includes the limits between a private domain and a public domain. The factor determining their obstinacy is mainly based on the exercise of the control of the public authority, whatever this authority is, on a space of its competence, in front of possible private encroachments. (...)

The second fragmented category of the limits includes the separations between private domains. The mechanism in the work in their preservation is the control by the parts concerned by their own ground. (Gauthiez, 1999, pp.17-25)

Let us observe, since this attempt of clarifying the authorities of a matrix, one moment of relation between the drawing of a village and the places that are proposed to the glance. In other words, let us try to see how the line sometimes operated in connection with the prerogatives of an initial Greek optical device.

4) The line in the plan.

The surrounding wall of the village of Monterigioni can be defined as the marker of a spatial shared limit (cf. Fig.1²).

The photographic image shows us that the plan, the line and the draw are bases which allow a meeting between human beings within places, as a relation between the extents. (We shall agree that any art results from the conquest of the spacing between human beings.³) The various walls, which join, establish hollows and extents in the place where they divide the territory. With these regulations of distance allowing the projections and individual theaters, these lines, with the distances they imply, establish the characters of time and space within the architecture. (Therefore, an architecture lets be understood from the parameters ordered by the topological and by the topographic (Lussault, 2007)).

Let us try to see how these various lines stemming from the plan made by human beings are organized in the space and establish this unity of spacing.

In the representation of the space in perspective, we use to speak about the groundline, about the skyline, but hardly about the draw. The notion of draw rather sends back to the raw and carnal mark of the chalk on the blackboard, that is to say to the convocation through a hard line of all the parameters, materials, stories contained and brought back since the place where the sign is inscribed. The draw becomes thus a generic, rupestral and ancestral shape of the line. I shall bring it closer to the imprint, wanted by the hand and measured since the step of the man, but also to the meeting between the sky and the ground: where verticality is justified by horizontality. Are contained in draw the holding of a body still badly assured in the usage of the signs, or the holding of a body that is inscribed above all in the main part of the environmental parameters where he tries to be held. The draw convokes the concrete and cosmic characters of the presence and the place of the body.

Thus the plan of a city carries all the spontaneous and rationalized social practices, coordinated in a most frontal way in the space. (There are hard draws and soft draws.)

I consider, through this image, rather the notion of line than the notion of draw. But it seems to me important to replace the idea of draw (and of trace) within the distinction between soft line and hard line and, more exactly, in their meeting. Let us take an example: John Ford inscribes the credits of his film *Young Mr. Lincoln* "in the marble". Abraham Lincoln's name is engraved officially in the reflected light of America, within the show of its history and its geography. The mark made by writings and by signs reports an absolute truth which transcends as much as this mark is inscribed since a hegemony which exceeds us. It contains an immemorial time.

The plan participates of a recovering of temporality between hard lines and soft lines.

In the image of the village, the plan is what presides over the establishment of the ground under the light, while the objects of the architecture and of the spatial division (enclosure, walls...) operate their spacings. Phenomena of resonance and of resistance connect traces and lines between them.

The question of the line in architecture has to consider a synthesis of rules and parameters of our perceptions since a vision unified by the optics.

The enclosure and the walls of this village participate in an example: the enclosure separates the city from a shared inviolable (a shared invisible), and inscribes all the houses connected between them in the parameters of diverse, multiple, multi-leveled extent).

2 Personal drawings had as a base an aerial photograph of the village named Monterigioni (Tuscany) found in a book written by Norberg Schulz (1981, p.167).

3 On this subject, the analysis of the notion of spacing in the writings of architecture of Françoise Choay (2006) could be envisaged since certain perspectives of André Leroi-Gourhan (1993).

Limitations and theater of this ban are then connected. The borders can be shared by all because a spectacular device exists, which connects human beings with the world. Every house is connected to the other one and to the universal: streets make houses joining between them since lines "of flight". The plans, which separate, order and associate while they separate.

There is an optical combination of the values of transversality and of longitudinality combined by the line. The line thus participates in invisible and dumb draws connecting objects between them within extents which build the three-dimensionality of a space. Since the hand and the will of human beings, they were a tool allowing the space to accommodate the sounds and the images of the dramatizations. The line inscribes the draws of construction so that the optical and geometrical orders coordinate towards an overtaking of the organic dimension.

It is necessary to understand here the establishment of this enclosure and of these streets by the line. The notion of architectural line, protective of the invisible, corresponds to all the assembled organic layouts, building units of spacing. The spacing is here the historic value which legitimizes the presence and the human culture. The line sets down a capacity to live, to contain, to distribute, to articulate. (Cf. Fig.2)

There is a history of the spacing to be defined. This one can be apprehended only since the drawing of this line-shape which contains the multiplicities of distances, rhythms... which human beings need to recognize within a place: closing, opening, human theater... The line, stemming from the hand, connects the limits of the body to the necessary spacings between the expressions, the needs and the human functionalities.

Since this ancient Greek transversal and longitudinal organization which shares the territories of the human beings and the territories of the gods within the optical devices of representation (Frontisi-Ducroux, 1993), the line allows that becomes established on earth a theater between the human beings, where spaces lead a war of the images then pacified.

5) The paradox of the intermediate spaces.

If we have a look at the nowadays city within the framework of the technicalities put in the service of the human beings, we make the report of a city where the urban spreading is more and more agree with the influence of the virtual utopia.

The image itself is observed since the validation of an explosion of time (the cheap digital support does not make any more necessary the calculation of the temporal economy). History of the image and history of the space are upset again in their referents.

Nevertheless, the optical scale of the dimensions of the human being was the object of a device in ancient Greece: transversal glance of the gods, longitudinal glance of the human beings.

The conflict between the line and the color, the risk of an *opus incertum*, the "indistinction" between human vision and divine vision, revealed the necessary preservation of these territorial divisions between sacred and profane since the oral and written dimensions by the image during XVIth century.

The virtual places us within an expansion, that of the cancer of the spot: the photography restored the power to the spot against the line, the virtual allows the inflation of this surface.

The white-black frames of the colors of the Attic ceramic reveal the entropy of the meetings between darkness and brightness since which the ancient human beings were remotely put.

The Renaissance replays the division of the *mixité* of the shade and the light.

The Hogarth's printings of Elizabethan England and their serpentine allow us to evolve between the limits of drawn objects (the undulations and the convolutions of the smoke).

English garden cities of the XXth century define these "closes", devices of the space built around the public streets connecting private ways.

These "intermediate" spaces, glorified in certain western cities like Lyon, Venice, Prague, or by the urbanism of the cities of Latin America, are more than the places of meeting between diverse temporality (private-public) and diverse varieties of the ephemeral. These passages offer occasions of distances, contingencies and mixités where the most extreme positions of spectators and actors are met between individuals and community.

There, on these entries and exits tumble down the aggression, the firm, maintained, constructed and spontaneous hatred revealed in a little controllable way... If it is not by the regulation of flows.

These places today mistreated ("gated Communities", dullness of the generic city, urban spreading, franchising of the big brands...) show phenomena of individual captures and strategic relinquishments ("non-places"). Nevertheless, it is important to connect them with the screen of the romantic shows and *romanesques* reasons of our cities. The direction of the limits, of the borders, has to can be recognized as moments of restoring of the social differences to be accepted. The tragedies and their compulsive contents, as shows it us the shot of the movie of Ari Folman.

The place of the death (its eclipse) in the contemporary city reappears on this incapacity of sharing.

It takes place behind this absence of shared recognition a disorder of the impossible autonomy of our bodies (is it inside a narrative, outside a narrative? What is there instead of it?). It results from it the incapacity to die and to born again, to recognize and to meet within the community.

The Portuguese cemeteries, the Spanish ones, and, closer of us, those in the Vosges, dominate the city, are at the feet of the churches, at the feet of those who open the landscape, linking the various cities within the landscapes.

Once again the writing of the line is eluded.

What is drawing for an architect? This question joins the question of the implicit in the codes of representation and of perception, and the question of the creative necessities of human beings when they build a city, necessities where could be find our needs to live, to expose ourselves within the functional economies.

Walter Benjamin establishes a hierarchy of the show of the body, of his empowerment from the human being by the time it's exposed: passage covered in front of showcases, body in movement, the address, the hand (envisaged as original mode of expression)...

The ephemeral aspects of our devices contain more strongly that these, the reasons of the division of the profane and sacred territories.

The city can die and born again only by asserting the power of the spontaneity.

Even if this sharing is the object of a struggle to death.

Ari Folman shows us the ephemeral or the possibility of being able to die on the meeting of a show moved since the tragic of the night.

Legends of the illustrations.

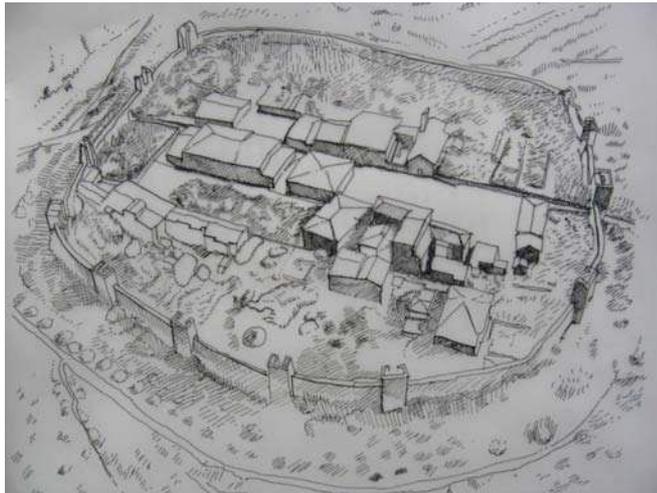


Fig.1. Monterigioni, Tuscan village.

Plans and screens transposed and transported since the devices of walls, low walls, surrounding walls, facades, are to be observed since the consideration of the human plan. The art of the line in the architecture, such a technology stemming from the draw, is defined by its capacity to build perspective *feuilletages*, imaginary and real, visible and invisible laminations, but resounding between them in a unity of tone defining the genius loci.

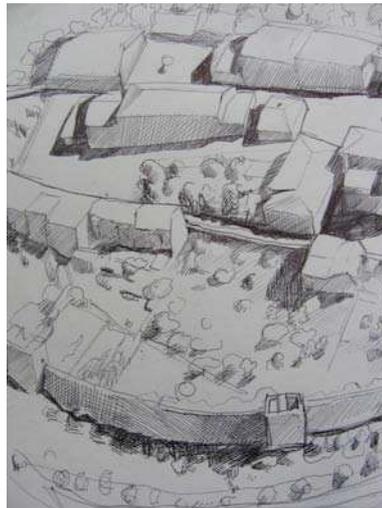


Fig.2. Monterigioni, Tuscan village.

There are layouts of plans, of screens, of directions of flight, of horizons, of grounds, of spots, of borders, of limits, of thresholds, of edges, which were combined since this art to make a correspondence between optical order and geometrical order.

An analysis of the topological and topographic relations asks for example the organizations and the more invisible knots of invisible lines of construction to be envisaged.

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