Commoning-Desiring Machine

How can channeling desire through the city help in establishing commons?

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Introduction

I started this research with my intuitive naivety of a first-year master's student, trying to answer the question "how can architects have any political agency?" This issue arose quite naturally from countless debates with fellow student friends, where the most frequent (albeit tragic) refrain was "can we actually do anything?"- perhaps a less formal, but more vivid expression of our collective struggles with the precarity of our future profession. This worry is understandable, architecture out of all the arts is perhaps the one most subjugated to huge monetary expenses and within this system of production, the production of architecture seems to sway further and further away from its art status towards purely functional craft. Money designs, as much as we – architects, do. The most popular architectural aphorism of the neoliberal era is "form follows finance". Unfortunately, it is the budget that pre-empts the design (and even to a greater extent the project realization), not the other way round. So, for anyone concerned about good architecture, demanding different political conditions would be a "right thing to do" paraphrasing Rishi Sunak's pragmatic, yet insincere, plea at the COP27[1]. In this way, the struggle for political architecture should be truly universal, just like the struggle for saving our common earth! It can stem both from some left-wing zeal, but also from mere mercenary pragmatism. But then how can this be achieved? How can we do anything, while being always inferior to the power of the market? How can we change political reality to at least alleviate the disasters of neoliberalism, not

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1   Sunak R. in Guardian News. (2022, November 7). Acting on climate is "right thing to do", says Rishi Sunak at Cop27 [VideoW]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmI24fBERss

only altruistically, but also for us – architects, so we can actually produce good architecture or simply decent living environments?

This brought me to the concept of Commons. Commons, as a different type of governmentality - something by-passing the state/market alternative and presenting an affirmative way of collective praxis, as a method of organizing our societies. In a country so tormented by the grand narratives of the 20th century, as my homeland Poland, this seemed like something that could escape the pejorative symbolic connections of the by-gone social projects and propose something neither right nor left-wing, but rather radically democratic. The noble prize for Elinor Ostrom – the pioneer of commons research and the uncontroversial premises of the concept meant that commoning was creating more and more buzz in political theory but also in architectural theoretical discourses. Assemble, Raumlabor, R-Urban... those are just some offices that lately established their names in the mainstream of architectural pop culture embracing the commons-based way of practicing architecture.

But this for me was not enough. All of those offices despite their often cult status, still remain a niche in architecture and their success lies in escaping the current system of production, rather than working within it. It is predominantly due to a different way of organizing the production of architecture, that they can actually produce different architecture. The trickier part is going the other way round. So, I came up with a salient question: Can architecture produce a new system of production? Is there something immanent to the object of architecture that can invigorate a struggle for new collective ways of living? Let's go on (let's dream big)! Can we work within the logic of the market and outsmart it? Or even better, can the hegemony of the current political economy inform, on how to create a new political system that would ultimately replace it?

This sounds quite ambitious for any architectural project, let alone for one covered within a master's thesis, but I suppose that even the tiniest step in this direction, would be worth exploring (at least for the sake of my own curiosity). So where does one start? I propose to commence at the connection of the two main spheres comprising our lives, that would be, where the worlds of political and libidinal economies most obviously meet, and that is, as I shall explain, within the concept of desire.

Desire

The essential claim of Deleuze & Guattari in Anti-Oedipus is that libidinal and political economy are one and the same thing[1]. In fact, they literally claim that *"desire is part of the infrastructure"*[2] of the political economy. However, desire for those two intellectuals is not the same as for most of us, especially those following the lineage of Freud and psychoanalysis. Desire is in fact, what they argue, a generative, productive entity. It can be best understood by following how Marx and Engels described the production of one's own life as the ultimate goal of men:

"By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production"[3]

This is quite clear. Following this line of thought, producing one's life is producing what exceeds mere reproduction. It is the surplus that is one's way of imprinting his stamp upon reality. I argue that precisely this excessive stamp is the product of desire – so simply, the desire is a certain individual way of producing one's own life. The implications of this, however, are complex, so to better explain my concept of desire, I will put forward a list of theses, that are to concisely and clearly put forward what will be important for this investigation.

1   Smith, D. W. (2012). Essays on deleuze. Edinburgh University Press.
2   Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2009). Anti-Oedipus: capitalism and schizophrenia. Penguin. (p. 104)
3   Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1970). The german ideology (Vol. 1). International Publishers Co. (p. 114)

Theses on Desire

I. As long as human subjects exist, there is desire.

    a. To venture on the topic of whether desire can be non-human is beyond the scope of this analysis. Thus, desire is considered solely a part of the human realm.

II. Desire is productive as it produces action.

    a. Thus, we can speak of desiring-production.

    b. Deleuze and Guattari explain the desiring-production process as a "*set of passive syntheses that engineer partial objects, flows, and bodies, and that function as units of production. The real is the end product, the result of the passive syntheses of desire as autoproduction of the unconscious.*"[4]

III. Desire is a machine, in the sense that an input produces a real output.

    a. Thus, we can speak of desiring-machine.

    b. Every subject is a desiring-machine, but also it is important to consider the a sum of desiring subjects as that which creates the collective desiring-machine on the population scale, that ultimately propels the production in our societies.

IV. The fundamental object of desire is surplus-life.

    a. Following Žižek "*The ultimate lesson of psychoanalysis is that human life is never "just life": humans are not simply alive, they are possessed by the strange drive to enjoy life in excess, passionately attached to a surplus which sticks out and derails the ordinary run of things*"[5].

    b. Surplus-life is precisely life in excess. It is the urge to go beyond mere reproduction of life and express one's own way of life.

        i. Surplus-life is inclusive of what psychoanalysis defined as *jouissance*, enjoyment and pleasure, as it constitutes all excess beyond life's reproduction.

V. Although desire has no real object except surplus-life, the subject projects perceived objects of desire that it believes it desires, creating imaginary representations for surplus-life.

    a. The creation of such perceived-objects is greatly facilitated by the dominant political capitalist economy.

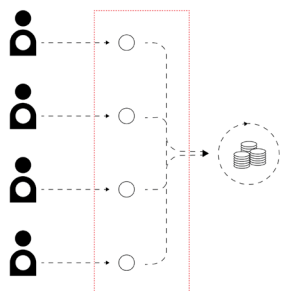   b. The perceived object of desire is signifying the promise of surplus-life in its attainment
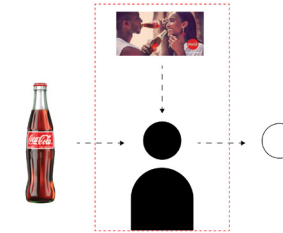
    c. Lack is an emotional state that stems from a failure to realize the perceived object of desire. In that way, lack is always subjugated to the perceived-object of desire

        i. It is explained by Deleuze and Guattari, as such: "*Lack (manque) is created, planned, and organized in and through social production. It is counter produced as a result of the pressure of antiproduction; the latter falls back on (se rabat*

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4   Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2009). Anti-Oedipus: capitalism and schizophrenia. Penguin.

5   Zizek, S. (2012). Less than nothing: Hegel and the shadow of dialectical materialism. Verso Books. (p.499)

sur) the forces of production and appropriates them. It is never primary; production is never organized on the basis of a pre-existing need or lack (manque). It is lack that infiltrates itself, creates empty spaces or vacuoles, and propagates itself in accordance with the organization of an already existing organization of production."[6]

    ii. They go on to clarify how lack is instrumentalized for the needs of capital in the market economy: *"The deliberate creation of lack as a function of market economy is the art of a dominant class. This involves deliberately organizing wants and needs (manque) amid an abundance of production; making all of desire teeter and fall victim to the great fear of not having one's needs satisfied"*[7]

VI. The production of one's desire is realized within the code of the perceived object of desire.

    a. Codes are the means of realization of the perceived object of desire.

        i. Equating the commodity with surplus-life, and thus establishing a common monetary code for desire realization

is what propels the capitalist machine.

VII. Desire realizes itself within the production of excess, that is surplus-life.

    a. Surplus-life is the product of the desiring-machine.

        i. Surplus-life is maximizing the intensity of subjects' libidinal investment into an event.

VIII. Surplus-life creates an abundance of potential to engage in the production of diverse types of relations.

    a. Thus, desire should be understood as a profoundly creative machine.

        i. For instance, in this way Capital appropriates surplus-life by presenting monetary value as a single code of realization for our desires, which are equated by the advertising industry to some sort of commodity. In effect forming what Deleuze and Guattari would call Desiring-production.

            1. Brian Massumi explains it simply as *"Economization is the conversion of one kind of surplus-value (surplus-value of life) into another (capitalist surplus-value)"*[8]

IX. Then controlling desires is a crucial task of any system of production, as following Deleuze the libidinal economy is the infrastructure for the political economy[9].

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2009). Anti-Oedipus: capitalism and schizophrenia. Penguin.
7   Ibid.

8   Massumi, B. (2018). 99 theses on the revaluation of value: A postcapitalist manifesto. U of Minnesota Press.
9   Smith, D. W. (2012). Essays on deleuze. Edinburgh University Press.

How does this then relate to architecture? The fundamental point that can be derived from those theses is that considering desiring as limited to one person, would be quite understandably limiting. Desiring is as much an individual as a collective endeavour. There is an individual subject's desire, but there is also an overarching desire, that facilitates the flows of human production, and conceptualizing both is equally important. So, in a similar way, how a sum of individual desires becomes the interest of desiring-production, I will conceive of a field of desire that is to be appropriated by some form of praxis. Our collective/ individual desires distributed in the material world constitute a spatio-temporal field, forming regions of varying libidinal intensities. In this way desire can be perhaps conceptualized as a form of intensity detached from a fixed subject, where the focus lies in its intensity, which stems from praxis, forming what I will refer to from now on – spaces of desire.

Theses on Spaces of Desire

I.   All spaces are spaces of desire as long as they are entangled in some sort of human interaction.

II.   Spaces of desire are part of the spatial field of desire.

III.   The spatial field of desire varies in intensities of desire, creating nodal intensifications of desire.

    a.   Thus, spaces of desire are differentiated by the intensity of desire- simply the more intense concentration of desire, the more desirable the space is.

        i.   Differentiating the spatial field into constituent spaces is motivated by an attempt to analyse the points of intensification of desire, which are defined by experiential factors.

IV.   Spaces of desire are spaces of surplus-life.

V.   Absorbing the flows of surplus-life should be critical in establishing any collective praxis, as surplus-life is the state of maximal libidinal investment of the subject.

    a.   Absorption of surplus-life is capturing the productive inputs of the desiring-machine in order to create a specific type of desiring-production.

    b.   The surplus can be absorbed by identification of lack within the existence of the collective, as an effort to prevent this lack, becomes the focus of desiring-production.

        i.   This follows the method of collective praxis intensification proposed by Ernest Laclau. Namely following his concept of

Antagonism, which is built on the premise of an "*impossibility that any social identity – be it an individual identity or a group identity – can achieve a state of perfect 'fullness' or completion, and the fact that the possibility of achieving such fullness will always be experienced as 'blocked' by external entities*"[10]

    c. The surplus can be absorbed by introducing a spatial possibility for collective action to be produced, where production is seen as a fundamental force that constitutes the surplus-life.

        i. Thus, what becomes critical is the provision of the certain potentiality of collective action within the spaces of surplus-life intensification.

VI. Spaces of desire consist of tangible and intangible relations.

VII. Intense spaces of desire possess strong affective capacities.

    a. The affective capacities vary in relation to different subjects.

        i. Then the architecture of desire would be the architecture that maximizes the capacity of spaces to introduce surplus-life into multiple domains of life.

VIII. Spaces of desire are distributed around the city in nodes of varying intensity- constituting the city desirescape.

IX. There is a meta-desirescape, which is congregating individual desires into a single assemblage, while simultaneously every subject produces his own individual desirescape rooted in his understanding of the city.

    a. The individual desirescape is built upon a cognitive understanding of the city and the expected capacities of different nodes to fulfil subject desires.

        i. The capacity of a node is judged on the basis of the image that the subject assigns to the node.

X. The meta-desirescape is constituted by individual desires, but it also largely constitutes one's desirescape as they co-form themselves in constant feedback loops.

    a. In this way conceptualizing the meta-desirescape might be more creative than thinking about a single individual's desirescape.

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10   Gilbert, J. (2013). Common ground. London, UK: Pluto Press.
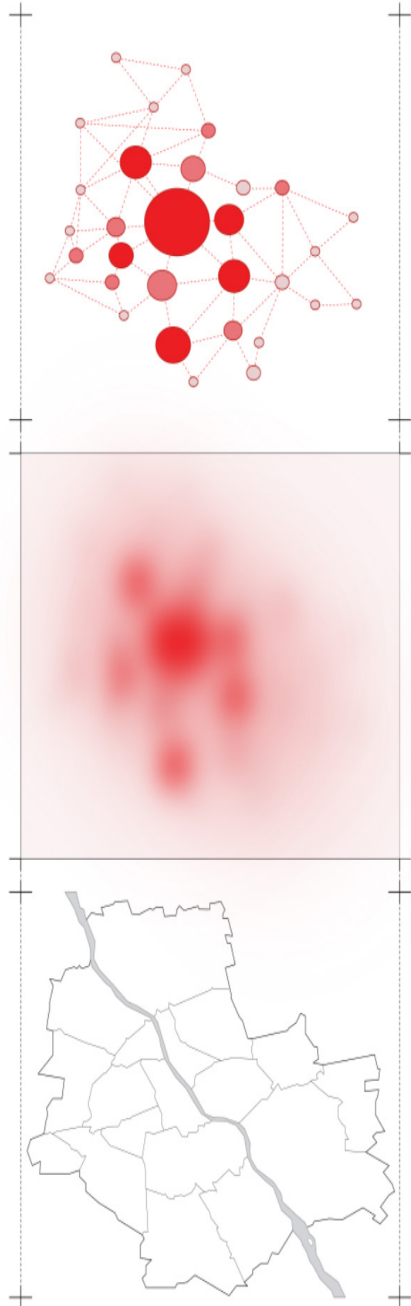
There are already some salient points that raise from the consideration of desire as a productive spatial field. Firstly, desire presents itself here as a motivation of all our actions, as a drive that produces our lives. Behind this motivation lies this incessant strive for surplus- what Žižek claimed, that derails the life from its simplest form. I argue thus that the main question that should follow is: what is this motivation? What is the object of desire, or rather more crucially what are the means of its realization? Thus, one embarks on a salient issue, concerning the capitalist, and in fact any political system, and this is the issue of value.

The Struggle for Value, Capital and the Surge upon Surplus-life

"It is time to take back value"[1], Massumi advocates with the first passage of his anti-capitalist manifesto '99 Theses on revaluation of Value'. Value is precisely what perpetuates the desiring-production. It is its code, its nutrient, most crucially it is its fuel. Thus, what we must aim for is proposing a new code, that mobilizes people's desires, to collectively produce different social praxis. So, following the convoluted terms introduced so far in this text- the desiring-machine is to be re-coded, a new type of praxis to emerge is commoning- one based on commons, so that a new self-perpetuating entity, taught by capital, designed to destroy it, will emerge. This finally allows me to arrive at the title of the paper, as precisely this is what I would call a Commoning-Desiring Machine.

Let's take a step back though and go to concrete politics. How such commoning-machine can come into being, and how can we rethink the people as a revolutionary subject after the failure of the grand political projects of the 20th century?

Chantal Mouffe proposes that *"The construction of a 'people' apt to build a different hegemony requires cultivating a multiplicity of discursive/affective practices that would erode the common affects that sustain the neoliberal hegemony and create the conditions for a radicalization of democracy."*[2] She continues that *"It is essential for a left populist strategy to acknowledge the importance of*

fostering common affects because, as Spinoza was keen to stress, an affect can only be displaced by an opposed affect, stronger than the one to be repressed."[3] So let's focus on those affects that afford the premise of realizing the surplus-life. What affects can drive us towards this surplus, surplus that is equitable to collective life intensification, rather than monetary value? In order to answer those let's focus on the concept of surplus-life and its direct political consequences.

When we acknowledge the drive towards surplus-life as the main propagator of political economy, the task of reclaiming the surplus from Capital should become a critical struggle of any progressive politics. In fact, it is seldom that Capital does not provide for sufficient means of reproduction of life, it much rather focuses on the excess we produce in life. Reproduction of the labour force and maintaining social stability is enough in developed countries (at least hitherto...) to make sure that people's means of subsistence will be sufficed to a large extent. It is then the appropriation of surplus-life that becomes the main task of the dominant classes, so that all excess produced, produces the capitalist economy.

People's life is to be appropriated to the maximum. The reproduction of life shall be sufficed, but beyond it, all time is to be spent on either production or consumption of a vast array of commodities, or ideally, on both of them simultaneously. This is the directory of the modern state. The main weapons in enforcing consumption are privatization and monetization, while production thrives on the precarity of labour and the exploitation of data we generate from our everyday leisure activities. In essence, the overarching logic proclaims that we can live, but all this life is to be subordinated to the needs of capital.

Capital thus captures (ideally) all the production of surplus, while monetarizing the access to excess, depriving humans of 'free' surplus-life for its own sake. This requires constantly coming up with new ways of realization of excess,

1   Massumi, B. (2018). 99 theses on the revaluation of value: A postcapitalist manifesto. U of Minnesota Press.
2   Mouffe, C. (2019). For a left populism (p. 29).
3   Ibid.

that all shall be subordinated to the monetary code of the capitalist economy – inundating people with a flow of brand new, yet quite useless commodities. Eventually ending up in a situation, explained by the protagonist of David Fincher's blockbuster Fightclub, buying *"things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like."*[4]

The most apparent example, illustrating that it is the surplus-life that is the ultimate object of desire, is the advertising world. Contemporary ads tend to ignore the most pragmatic functions of the advertised products, rather focusing strictly on equating the images of the commodity with some form of enjoyment. Apple – Think Different, Coca Cola – Open Happiness, Mastercard - Priceless... no matter what the product is, the way of promoting it, is concluded in a slogan that relates to a certain lifestyle or emotion, or more broadly, what is so blatantly suggested by the Mastercard commercials, something intangible with non-quantifiable character.

Towards the Immanence of the Surplus-life & its Common Origins

In order to escape this trap - of the link between commodity and surplus-life, which is set up by, what Althusser would refer to, as the ideological state apparatus[5], one must consider surplus-life as a more primary bodily matter. When one is to identify deprivation of excess, one cannot focus on deprivation from capitalist products, but rather on deprivation from a certain embodied immanent excess, which stems from our experience of the world.

What we are deprived of by Capital is the multitude of relations, that are to be replaced by those, which can be commodified. It is not a resource that is primarily alienated, it is the way of interacting with the world, which deteriorates in capitalism. Jonathan Crary, in his book about monetization of

the everyday life, writes that *"Everything once loosely considered to be 'personal, (...) is now reconfigured so as to facilitate the fabricating of oneself into a jumble of identities that exist only as effects of temporary technological arrangements."*[6] Personal experiences are standardised to succumb to the technological solutions imposed by the dominant class. In this way, struggle for commons is not only a struggle for an enclosed resource, but also a struggle for our experience of the world, which despite its individual character, suffers from the same threats of the homogenizing forces of capitalism.

This finally links us back to the commons, but rather in a different sense than what is proposed in conventional literature on the topic. David Bollier described commoners as those *'focused on reclaiming their "common wealth," in both the material and political sense'*[7], and what other "wealth" we have than the one of our experiences of the world. Biologist Jakob von Uexküll coined the term Umwelt, which was to be understood as the personal world of each creature, based upon its individual, subjective experience[8]. The Umwelt is the wealth, the multiplicity of possible ways in how we can produce our lives, or simply speaking of how we can experience the real. It is what constitutes the true value of life - life for its own sake. Capitalism as the great homogenizer tackles precisely this, it drowns out all excess from how we can relate to the environment and despite all Umwelts being personal, they collectively suffer from the same fate.

To better understand it we can bring in the concept of transindividuation coined by Gilbert Simondon. The French philosopher as paraphrased by his compatriot Bernard Stiegler suggested that *"the individuation of the psyche is*

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4   Actually the original quote is from Ramsey, D. (2013). The total money makeover: Classic edition: A proven plan for financial fitness. Thomas Nelson.
5   Althusser, L. (2020). On ideology. Verso Books.

6   Crary, J. in Hardt, M. (2013, September 01). Michael Hardt on Jonathan Crary's 24/7. Retrieved January 8, 2023, from https://www.artforum.com/print/201307/jonathan-crary-s-24-7-42610
7   Bollier, D., (2020). Commoning as a tranformative Social Paradigm (p. 2), Routledge.
8   Feiten, T. (2022, December 06). "Jakob von Uexküll's concept of Umwelt". Retrieved January 8, 2023, from https://www.thephilosopher1923.org/post/jakob-von-uexkull-umwelt

always already an individuation of a group of psyches, because a psyche is never alone. It always operates in relation to another psyche.'" It is key to understand the futility of an attempt in abstracting a psyche from the socius. We individuate together as much as alone, as there can never be a clear boundary between the one and the many. Then what we all collectively relate to are certain material conditions, that frame our existence. Uexküll pointed out that the Umwelt discloses through each creature's subjective experience of the world[10], but the material base for the possibility of different experiences is pre-defined. In this way, one can clearly see that the question of one's Umwelt is as much our own as it is a question of what processes we (and all which surrounds us) experience collectively.

One can consider umwelt as a virtual desirescape, that is to be actualized by the intentions of the subject in how he wants to 'produce' his life. This introduces a key distinction into the virtual and the actual, which are the two components comprising the reality. This concept introduced by Deleuze is explained by Marc Boumeester as "*[R]eality exists of two parts, the virtual and the actualized [actual], whereby the virtual is not seen as a technologically enhanced expansion of the sensory, rather it is interpreted as the sum of all potential (past, present and future) of all that could be actualized, and of all potential (past, present and future) that could not be actualized. [...] the virtual is (an) event in itself and acts in affective ways regardless of its actualization into a physically perceivable entity. Therefore, the virtual is potential that is already actualized through its affective capacities"[11]* Understood in this way, the umwelt defines our ability to

9   Stiegler, B. in Rogoff, B., & Stiegler, B. (n.d.). Transindividuation - Journal #14 March 2010 - e-flux. Retrieved January 8, 2023, from https://www.e-flux.com/journal/14/61314/transindividuation/
10   Feiten, T. (2022, December 06). "Jakob von Uexküll's concept of Umwelt". Retrieved January 8, 2023, from https://www.thephilosopher1923.org/post/jakob-von-uexkull-umwelt
11   Boumeester, M. (2023) "Technicity as the Montage Production of the Mundane" in The Space of Technicity: Theorising Social, Technical and Environmental Entanglements, eds. R. Gorny, S. Kousoulas, D. Perera and A. Radman, (Lexington Books: Lanham, Maryland)

realize our desires, it is what pre-empts them and define the multiple ways of their realizations.

Seen in this way the struggle for commons adds up to a novel and arguably a much more creative common resource, that we should defend from any attempt of enclosure, that consequently is an attempt in stifling our desires. These particularly important resources are the multifarious potentials of how we can experience the environment and any attempt of assaulting it, shall generate a collective revolt. However, to abstain from the convenient vagueness of the concept and its possible implications, I propose a categorization that could help us analyse these resources and identify threats to its degradation.
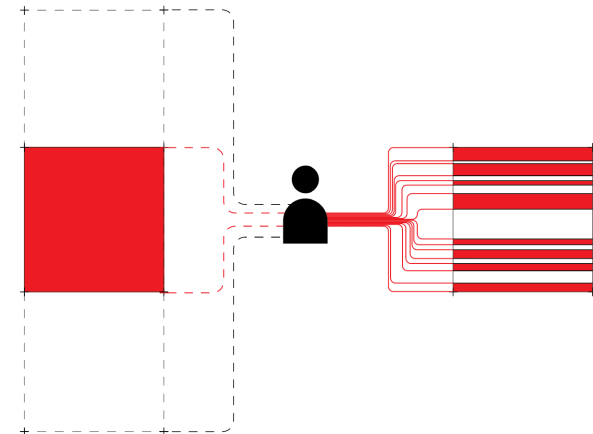
Common Experience

Thus, I suggest that the struggle for commons shifts. The old mobilizing factor that was an enclosure of a common resource shall still be considered important, but a tactic much more powerful, inclusive, and radical, would be to shift from this archaic fixation with the object of the commons – the *res communis*, to a possibility of the emergence of a relation between the object and the subject. That might at first sound terribly abstract, but when one introduces the concept of the Common Umwelt it becomes much clearer.

Common Umwelt is really a possibility of interaction that the world affords us. The affordance in here becomes a key concept that one shall understand following the psychologist J.J Gibson. He describes *"The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill (...) I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment."[12]* If one then talks about affordances of architecture, it is what an object – architecture, affords to the subject – its user.

But the use of the concept still remains unclear. How is one to assess what sort of affordances are offered to the subject? I propose to assess it with a certain rigour, and this rigour could be imposed by referring to what Guattari described as ecosophy. In his essay the Three Ecologies the French psychoanalyst proposed that *"Without modifications to the social and material environment, there can be no change in mentalities. Here, we are in the presence of a circle that leads me to postulate the necessity of founding an "ecosophy" that would link environmental ecology to social ecology and to mental ecology"[13].* Guattari postulates that the triad of mental, social, environmental are inseparable, as they codependently create each other. Thus, following this line of thinking, one shall consider the affordances of the umwelt on those three salient registers, and always have in mind that changing one is going to have an impact on the other two.

The effort to completely understand the three ecologies will forever remain a futile one, but perhaps it is easiest to explicate it on the example of the mental ecology, so how does an individual relate to a certain space? One might seek the answer within the human body, more precisely in how an individual receive information from the outside, which brings us directly to the senses. All of them are what define our umwelts, they constitute the possibility of experience.

But crucially, senses are only receptors, although they are utilized in all our interactions with the world, they receive their stimuli from the environment, which is to some extent common to all of us. Thus, deprivation of our bodily experience, of the immanent surplus, can be perhaps analysed by focusing on different senses. That means while analyzing a location that can become a site of common praxis one might start with analyzing one's bodily perceptions. That is, following his sensory experience focusing on: taste, smell, sight, sound, balance (spatial orientation) and different types of touch (movements, stasis, haptic).

The Social affordances would be the ones concerned with what possibilities a space affords for a certain spatial collective praxis to emerge. That is for instance, how can people group, how big would be the groups, what can people perform collectively in there etc. While the Environmental would concentrate on the issues of the form of the space, how can we inhabit it, who can inhabit it - what ecosystems are there, what can emerge, finally what does it entail for the user.

Of course, the conventional commons struggle, struggle over an external resource, is still important. Its premise to provide an alternative to *"economocentric reason and to exploitative power relations"[14]* which haunt all aspects of our collective lives, is as important as ever. *It is just that I propose the definition of commons to be more inclusive and as such hopefully more politically radical and useful.*

So, let's reframe the commons struggle, let's refocus from a common resource to a common Umwelt (sic!), to put our experience or rather their possible scope on the forefront of our political battles.

12   Gibson, J. J. (1977). The theory of affordances. Hilldale, USA, 1(2), 67-82.
13   Guattari, F. (2005). The three ecologies. Bloomsbury Publishing.

14   Stavrides, S., (2016). Common space. London: Zed Books, p.54.

City as the Site of the Political

Rossi Braidotti defined the political as that which focuses *"on the transformative experimentations with new arts of resistance and existence."*[15] Proposing new ways of existence becomes then the political task *par excellence.* Those new ways of life shall follow the inherent creativity of humans and their productive strive for surplus. If Capitalism is the great homogenizer, the unconstrained surplus-life shall be the diversifier.

But as with any architectural project, similarly, the political project needs its territory – its site. To identify an appropriate location, we need to look out for a place of intense libidinal investment, a place where the new collective praxis can benefit from the pre-existing, yet perpetually becoming flows of the libidinal economy.

Following the trope of surplus-life one ends up in the city. The intense coupling of urban bodies, in itself, increases the potentiality for collective movements to emerge, in a common search for surplus-life. Claire Colebrook goes even further, suggesting that excess is in fact the constituent of urbanity. She proclaims that *"What is experienced [in the city] is not the simple pleasure of efficient consumption enabled by collective and cooperative labour, but joy". "[O]ne might say that the city or urbanity emerges when the life-serving instinct for collective labour and sociality detaches itself and becomes a drive"*[16]. City then is the place where not only we can suffice the reproduction of our lives, but also,

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15   Braidotti, R. (2017). On Affirmative Ethics [Video].
16   Colebrook, C. M. (2017). Sex and the (Anthropocene) city. Theory, Culture & Society, 34(2-3), 39-60.

we strive for excess, and we come together just to produce this excess.

How do we Grow (and not Die)?

A city is a space where certain universality of our lives is created by common affects that shape all of our collective/individual experiences. It is a space where political alliances are spontaneously established by people from the same: family, house, building, neighbourhood, occupation, class etc. Perhaps nothing better illustrates it than the signs from the 2010s Square movements manifestos where the universal 'we' opposed the dominant class, whether this was in Athens, New York or in Barcelona:

 ""We are ordinary people. We are like you, people who get up every morning to study, to work or find a job, people who have families and friends. People who work hard every day to provide a better future for those around us" (Barcelona). "We are unemployed people, working people, pensioners, students, schoolchildren, farmers, immigrants, outraged with all those who plunder our lives and decide without us" (Heraklion, Greece). "We are working people, jobless people, pensioners and young who come to Syntagma to fight and struggle for our lives and our future" (Athens). "We are nobody" (Syntagma square anonymous placard). "[17]

Coupling this with the spatial proximity of urban bodies, there is a great virtual potential for collective praxis within the urban landscapes of the world. The first node of the networks of struggles can emerge locally, directed against a very specific form of praxis, but then the assemblages of social relations formed within the city can easily propagate it to much greater scales. Hardt and Negri give an illustrious description of the process stressing that *"Each local struggle functions as a node that communicates with all the other nodes without any hub or center of intelligence. Each struggle remains singular and tied to its local*

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17   Stavrides, S. (2011). Communities of Crisis, Squares in Movement.

conditions but at the same time is immersed in the common web."[18] Following that even *"The global extension of the common does not negate the singularity of each of those who participates in the network."[19]*

This issue, namely the issue of scaling, should be considered critical in any collectively organized governmentality systems. What happens with a myriad of commons-based movements is that they cannot escape their initial limited scope, and they slowly die out together with the diminishing enthusiasm of their members. That is to say, there are three ways a group should think in order for the commons to become an important and resilient political force. Those would be scaling-out, scaling-up and scaling-deep. However, in order to explain those let's move to the more specific territory of our research – to the city, so that we can see how the spatial realm can help with scaling the efforts of building a sense of identity for collective praxis.

It is important to remind that I want to consider this process as connected to spatial praxis, so rather than tackling commons from the strictly political perspective, I will try to explain how this can be used within the domain of spatial praxis. Thus, any ideas about social organization shall emerge from the spatial organization of the urban environment, not the other way round.
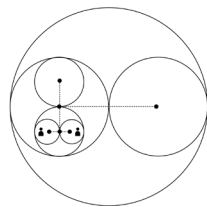
"Scaling out: the geographical and horizontal expansion and duplication of urban commons from one site to a larger site or multiple satellite sites in different

locations"[20]

Scaling-out is perhaps the most intuitive when thinking about commons-based praxis. It touches upon the fundamental question of how the praxis can be enlarged, how can it be applied elsewhere, can the interventions move when they achieved certain goals in one location etc. Perhaps, the most salient issue to consider is what makes it possible for such praxis to emerge in the first place, and if it emerged in one place how does it relate to some other location? In this way, scaling-out becomes an effort of establishing a way of communication between different apparently singular entities in the city, that would form a peculiar material syntax that mediates between the users of diverse spaces. The main efforts of such spatial praxis would be emphasizing the existing connections and creating new ones so that people can understand the complex assemblages of the city.

Example: **The Vacancies Map of Warsaw** was a project organized by Bęc Zmiana foundation and realized using Crowd map an internet tool for collaborative data gathering. It allowed to identify all the vacant buildings in Warsaw and was presented together with the manual on how those spaces could be rejuvenated. That followed an array of similar efforts all around the world from Budapest to Ney York[21], including projects that were addressed as whole countries such as the initiative of (im)possible living[22]. This shows how universal and trans-territorial can be the efforts of commoning and how one can become a precedent for a range of other places.

"Scaling up: the vertical expansion through an accumulative process of power

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18   Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2011). Commonwealth. Harvard University Press.
19   Ibid.

20   Zheng, C. (2022). Scaling Out, Up and Deep Understanding the Sustainment and Resilience of Urban Commons. In Design Commons (pp. 57-75). Springer, Cham.
21   Access to a list of those can be obtained by this link: https://vacantwarsaw.wordpress.com/linkownia/
22   Improve your city. (n.d.). Retrieved January 8, 2023, from http://www.impossibleliving.com/

from a local small-scale urban commons to a higher regime"²³
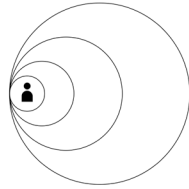
Scaling-up is a process where a group jumps from a basic organization level to the one above, which is often inclusive of the previous one. In creating a common identity that can later be used as a base for a collective praxis, one can think of how for instance, small local stories tie into greater historical narratives of the city. Although that process might not seem intuitively connected to the jumping in scale of power structures, it allows small local commons actions to be considered within the broader scope of district/city discourses.

Example: **Warsaw's Smile** started as an initiative by the Centrala studio to attract attention to an extraordinary tract of streets that disrupt the orthogonal grid of the Warsaw's Downtown. The architects stressed as "*The morphology of this street is so peculiar. The structure attracts cultural activists and has great potential of future team efforts.*"²⁴ That initiated a series of events and press publications on the street that nearly 10 years later culminated in making the revitalisation of the tract into the official planning policies of the city²⁵.

"Scaling deep: the internal development of urban commons to influence participants' worldviews and quality of relationships and ultimately form a

reciprocal self-learning and self-growing mechanism in the organization itself."²⁶

This is perhaps the most overlooked aspect of the sustenance of commons, yet at the same time, it is the one where designers have the greatest agency. Common space is often the most important anchor for any collective to function. The more meaningful, the space becomes for the participants of the movement, the more attached to the collective its members will be, thus any spatial intervention that affects transindividually can become a trigger of some collective action.

Example: **Otwarty Jazdów** (Open Jazdów) started in 2011 as an initiative to save the small Finnish houses settlement in Warsaw centre from demolition. The unique prefabricated structure donated to the USSR by the Finnish as war reparations became a spatial anchor for a thriving cultural community, which houses 22 different non-government organisations, runs countless cultural events and even a 2-month summer festival with countless events.²⁷

Without any attempts of scaling the commoning practices remain futile in any social change, what they do is rather merely boosting participants egos, providing satisfaction from political engagement, yet not contributing to any real change. Description of recent collective struggles proposed by Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek is a powerful and quite devastating critique of such 'un-scaled' movements. They proclaim that in fact "*This is politics transmuted into pastime – politics-as-drug-experience, perhaps – rather than anything capable of transforming society. Such protests are registered only in the minds of their participants, bypassing any transformation of social structures.*"²⁸ Thus what is perhaps more important than anything, is that the new movements

23   Zheng, C. (2022). Scaling Out, Up and Deep Understanding the Sustainment and Resilience of Urban Commons. In Design Commons (pp. 57-75). Springer, Cham.
24   Warsaw's smile. (n.d.). Retrieved January 8, 2023, from https://centrala.net.pl/warsaw-
25   Warsawnow. (2019, December 11). Zielone Centrum Warszawy „Uśmiech Warszawy". Retrieved January 8, 2023, from https://warsawnow.pl/zielone-centrum-warszawy-usmiech-warszawy/

26   Zheng, C. (2022). Scaling Out, Up and Deep Understanding the Sustainment and Resilience of Urban Commons. In Design Commons (pp. 57-75). Springer, Cham.
27   Otwarty Jazdów. Retrieved January 8, 2023, from https://jazdow.pl/
28   Srnicek, N., & Williams, A. (2019). Inventing the Future. Postcapitalism and a World without Work.

that re-define our collective codes of desire, movements that eventually focus of what really forms our common experience and which feed of the immanent spatial field of libidinal intensities cannot fall into complacency, they can't risk the same fate of so many groups proposing 'affirmative' politics, which perhaps is best exemplified by the initial zeal and the ultimate death of the Occupy movement. All libidinal potential is temporal. Simply stating, it can die out. But crucially, what I argue, is that some material architectural anchor can help us to maintain it.

Experience of the City & Urban Nodes

I identified the board, I identified the objective of the game, but what are its rules? How does one interact with the territory of the site – of the city, how certain places become locations of intense desirability, while others seem ostentatiously dull? In order to answer those questions, one shall understand the experience of the urban environment. Bernard Stiegler asserts that the "structure of consciousness is through and through cinematographic, if one calls the cinematographic in general that which proceeds by the montage of temporal objects, that is, of objects constituted by their movement"[1]. What comprises this cinematographic experience, and how does the montage unfold itself? I argue that this can be abstracted to some fundamental components that structure our interaction with the urban realm, thus I propose the concept of an Urban Node. Urban Node as a primary unit of our perception of the city.

The first thing to understand is that urban nodes (to which I will from now on refer to as nodes) do not exist as objective entities. Nodes are our personal way of conceiving space, it is how we perceive our urban experience. They do not exist as tangible entities but rather as certain images forming in the mind of the subject. Thus, first introducing how we perceive nodes, is critical to understand the concept of the node itself.

1   Stiegler B. in Crogan, P. (2006). Essential Viewing On Bernard Stiegler, La technique et le temps 3: Le temps du cinéma et la question du mal-être (Editions Galilée, 2001). Film-Philosophy, 10(2), 39-54.

Theses on the Image of the Node

I.   The image of the Node is an '*embodiment of subjective perception*'[2] subject generates regarding a certain place.

II. The image of a node is never stable; as all nodes, their images and perceiving subjects undergo a process of constant individuations.

   a. Following Simondon, '*being does not possess a unity of identity, which is that of the stable state in which no transformation is possible; being possesses a transductive unity: which is to say that it can go out of phase with itself, can overflow itself in any direction from its centre*'[3].

III. Image is built upon the subject understanding of the object's haecceity together with the relations of exteriority that the object is involved in.

   a. Haecceity is an object 'thisness'. According to 'Oxford Languages' it *is "that property or quality of a thing by virtue of which it is unique or describable as 'this (one)'"*[4].

   b. Relations of exteriority as defined by Manuel DeLanda in his book on assemblage theory imply "*a certain autonomy for the terms they relate, or as Deleuze puts it, it implies that a'a relation may change without changing the terms'. Relations of exteriority also imply that the properties of the component parts can never explain the relations which constitute a whole, that is, 'relations do not have as their*

causes the properties of the [component parts] between which they are established ...' although they may be caused by the exercise of a component's capacities."[5]

IV. As a node is entangled in multiple relations, it is the intensity of its entanglement that ultimately matters the most in the process of image creation.

   a. The intensity of entanglement is how much a certain object relates to a certain assemblage, but also it includes the intensity of the assemblage in subjects' perception.

      i.   Subjects recognize with ease the well-known narratives surrounding the object but might have a difficult time spotting those, which are deeply connected yet less present in the media etc.

      ii. Thus, the scale of the assemblage, that the object is entangled in, matters.

      iii. Example: In Warsaw the socialist modernist buildings immediately after the fall of berlin war were mostly associated with the oppressiveness of the by-gone socialist era, thus their architectural value was largely unnoticed. This resulted in demolition of some of the most architecturally significant polish buildings, such as Supersam or Pawilon Chemii. Fortunately, now, the historic context does not overshadow their architectural quality, so the modernist structures are treated with much greater respect.

V.   The assemblages that the node is part of can be of diverse character, that can be simplified as:

   a. Social: what types of people are associated with a particular node?

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2   Boumeester, M. (2022). CINEMATOGRAPHING PERCEPTION: Autopoiesis and Entropy of a Mediumless Medium. 10.13140/RG.2.2.15101.23526.

3   Simondon, G. in Gilbert, J. (2013). Common ground. London, UK: Pluto Press.

4   Oxford's language communities. (n.d.). Retrieved January 8, 2023, from https://languages.oup.com/oxford-global-languages/

5   DeLanda, M. (2019). A new philosophy of society: Assemblage theory and social complexity. Bloomsbury Publishing.

b. Functional: how do the functional relations of the node correspond to other diverse functions?

c. Formal: what is the architecture form that expresses the image of the node and how does it relate to other architectural forms?

d. Historical: what are the historical narratives that form the mythology of the spaces?

e. Cultural: Are there any references to the elements of the so-called popular culture or any cultural mythology?

f. Others: The list is non-exhaustive and never can be.

VI. The identity defines the image of the node in the subject's understanding, while simultaneously it signifies the potential to fulfil the subject's expectations, regarding his interaction with the node.

Finally, acknowledging the constantly individuating character of the node - which is merely an image with no fixed identity, I can continue to present the concept of Urban Nodes and connect it to our experience of the urban environment.

Theses on Urban Nodes and Interaction with the City

I. Nodes are fundamental in any cognitive understanding of the city.

II. Nodes are defined as places that afford a premise of realizing the subject's motive that drives him to interact with the city.

a. Thus, nodes should be understood as not mere containers of actions, but rather as places which possesses a certain affective capacity. In this sense, following psychologist James J. Gibson, the node is a space that provides certain affordances:

i. *"The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ivll (...) I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment."*[6]

III. The difference in node affordances is what constitutes the true diversity of the city.

IV. Nodes can be both attracting and repelling, both types of spaces form our cognitive understanding of the urban realm.

a. For the purpose of this paper, I will mainly focus on positive nodes – on attractors.

V. Nodal understanding is determined by the spatially nodal nature of the subject's immediate perception.

a. Subject spatiality and sensorial cognition are limited to the material limitations of the subject's organism.

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6   Gibson, J. J. (1977). The theory of affordances. Hilldale, USA, 1(2), 67-82.

VI.   Nodes have no definite boundaries; they can be overlapping, separated, inclusive of each other etc. It is rather what affects our decision to interact with a certain place that determines the existence of a node.

    a. In this way, the node is a virtual construct, that can be later actualized by the interaction with the city.

VII.   In an idealized situation of no previous subject engagement with the city nodes are constructed and actualized on the spot.

VIII.   Nodal understanding pre-empts any interaction with the city, as in order to interact with the city one is to place oneself in a specific node, and the node is chosen upon pre-conceived expectations regarding the node.

IX.   Nodal understanding is both spatial and temporal.

    a. Node potentialities vary according to time.

X.   Nodes in this way can be understood as spaces of certain events.

    a. Thus, can be referred to as event-spaces.

XI.   Nodes are connected by routes.

XII.   Routes are any spaces used for transportation between the nodes.

    a. Routes are chosen from the potentiality of transportation options between spaces, which is afforded by the material conditions of the city.

        i. Routes are primarily chosen by the efficiency of transportation, but can also be chosen by other factors such as the appeal of the route etc.

XIII.   As routes are spaces of sensorial engagement of the subject (as the subject travels via the route), they are spaces of potentiality for new nodes to emerge.

    a. The clearest example of this phenomena is how the cinematographic character of our cognition is capitalized in shopping malls. For instance, a common praxtice is to locate the main shops (most important nodes) far away from each other so that the smaller

ones, located on the route between them, can benefit from high traffic and possibly attract more customers.

XIV.   The experience of the node is the experience of the actual (physical interaction with the node) and the virtual (projections about past/present/future concerning the node).

    a. Thus, the critical trait of a node is its capacity to affect the subject.

This paints the cognitive understanding of the city as constructed primarily by two fundamental components: Nodes and Routes that connect them. What can be not stressed enough is that each node is different, no nodes are the same, and no two spatial conditions are the same. So then one perceives the nodes according to traits that differ and repeat between the nodes. These differences and similarities of nodes, or in other words the relations that nodes form between each other, are equally important in our subconscious understanding of what happens around us. Thus, I introduce another term, that will be the Urban Systems of Nodes, which will help immensely in understanding why the affect of one place is often not limited to one service, but rather spreads a certain ambience around a number of spatial entities.
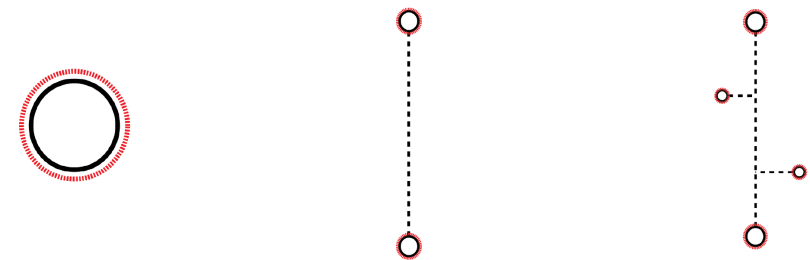
Theses on Urban Systems of Nodes

I. Nodes form relations with each other.

II. Subject's perception of relationality between nodes groups the nodes into distinct systems.

    a. It is the intensity of relations between nodes that matters the most in the process of system creation, as the creation of the system occurs in subject's perception.

III. The systems formed are associated with a certain way of perceiving the urban environment.

IV. Systems have certain ambiences, that produce a field of the affective capacity of the system.

    a. That is a certain field that is part of the system yet would not function without its main nodes, which produce the ambience around them.

V. I propose two main types of systems that can be distinguished within the urban landscape.

VI. These will be Singular Nodes and Assemblages

VII. Singular Node:

    a. The system is based upon one main node, while its perception is abstracted from its surroundings, and all relations it is part of.

    b. The creation of the main node is based on a diverse range of factors.

    i. i.e., this might include inserting a service of extraordinary quality into the area etc.

    c. The size of the system is limited to a singular node.

    i. This might be one restaurant, cinema, gallery etc.

    d. If one considers the node within the desirescape, it is characterized by significant intensification of libidinal intensity in an area.

    e. The system is characterized by its limited ambience, which only affects the closest proximity of the node.

    i. i.e., a small shop may benefit from the proximity of the cinema, but within the desirescape it is rather more an infrastructure for the main node, thus without it, it loses its appeal.

Example: Standing solitary in an anonymous piece of landscape is the outstanding bakery - SAM Żoliborz. It used to be a place with the best bread in Warsaw, but seldom did I visit it because of its unremarkable surroundings. Its location, somewhere between an everlasting construction site and a railway bridge, successfully prevented me from exploring anything that is around. SAM was like a beacon of desire in this repellent dull landscape.

VIII. The assemblage of Nodes:

    a. I argue that the Assemblage of Nodes is the most important organisation when considering the creation of the urban environment.

    b. The system is constituted by a network of nodes, that are conceived by the subject as elements of one ambience.

    i. The ambience of the system is spatially distributed within the territory of the assemblage.

    ii. Subject's perception of the Assemblage of Nodes as an emergent whole is salient, as all nodes of the city are theoretically entangled in some sort of relation (forming assemblages), however not all of them are perceived as such.

    1. In this way, there is a difference between the Assemblage of Nodes and the concept of Assemblage proposed by Deleuze & Guattari and later developed by Manuel

Delanda

2. The assemblage of Nodes narrows down Delanda's definition of Assemblage in order to prevent the usage of the concept as a catch-all term that often rather obfuscates the urban relations rather than clarifies them. That is not to say that I reject Delanda's theory, rather I believe that a more specific concept can be more creative in the study of the urban realm. I will differentiate between the two by speaking of the 'Assemblage of Nodes' or 'assemblage' as such.

c. The traits of the system follow the main characteristics of the assemblage theory put forward by Manuel Delanda:

   i. Assemblages are defined by relations of exteriority (previously explained in the Image of the Node – 4.a.).

   ii. *"Assemblages are characterized by the "emergent properties" that are "produced by the interactions between components"*[7]. For the sake of this inquiry, the main emergent component of the assemblage would be its 'desirability'.

     1. In this way, we might use the desirescape analysis as a tool for identifying potential assemblages, whereas other perceivable relationalities might constitute the virtual desirescape that is yet to be actualized.

   iii. The assemblage's identity undergoes periods of stabilization and de-stabilization through the processes of (de)coding and (de)territorialization. Delanda compares the actions of those processes so that each is a peculiar control knob, which changing parameters stabilize or de-stabilize the assemblage.

     1. *"Territorialization is a measure of homogeneity, and coding is a measure of the degree to which a social outcome is generated by a grammar or algorithm."*[8]

d. Assemblages of Nodes come into being by the subject understanding of the perceivable strong relationship between nodes.

   i. That is to say, a de-stabilized assemblage after the introduction of one territorializing node might form an Assemblage of Nodes. There is a threshold between an unstable assemblage and an Assemblage of Nodes, which depends upon the previously mentioned "control knobs" of coding and territorialization.

   ii. The Assemblages of Nodes is never perfectly stable, as nodes' character change or nodes are removed or added to the assemblage (i.e., the introduction of a new bar in a certain district etc.).

e. Assemblages of nodes exist on different scales, creating assemblages of assemblages.

   i. For instance, a square with its specific ambiance can be a part of a district that has its own distinct character.

   ii. That is to say on different scales the assemblages have different emergent properties despite being spatially inclusive.

EXAMPLE: There are many appealing districts in Warsaw, but perhaps Stary Mokotów is my favourite. Small, early 20th-century tenements (often reconstructed after WW2) comprise its cosy character, where everyday life bristles across its compact streets.

7   Ball, A. (2018). Manuel delanda, assemblage theory (edinburgh university press, 2016). Parrhesia, (29), 241-247. Retrieved from http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia29/parrhesia29_ball.pdf

8   Little, D. (n.d.). Delanda on concepts, knobs, and phase transitions. Retrieved January 9, 2023, from https://understandingsociety.blogspot.com/2016/11/delanda-on-concepts-knobs-and-phase.html

Node/ Assemblage Strength and Exo-Identities

Identifying those fundamental abstract ways of interacting with the city is crucial in any effort of establishing a theory of the city's desirescape that can be useful for political praxis. The crucial point concerning the nodes was considering them as places with a certain capacity to fulfil subject's expectations. Those expectations can be omnifarious, from such sporadic things as getting groceries to more specific urges such as experiencing all complex rituals and phenomena that accompany a rave party. However, what links them is that most often they are realized within the realm of desire. We do not just want anything in life, we produce our life in a certain manner that creates our personal way of life. Thus, what makes a certain space desirable is the image we concieve of it, it is the assemblages it is part of, it is finally the intensity of its capacities to fulfil different types of human desires.

And it is intensity again which is a crucial factor one has to take into account while considering the desirability of the place. The intensity of an urban node/ assemblage indicates how strongly a certain space engraves its image in our perception. Thus, when one is to establish a space of desire within the city, one shall think how the node/assemblage could be strengthened, so they can create the strongest libidinal investment of as many individuals as possible (albeit sometimes it might be useful to limit the 'audience' of a place to increase the emotional connection of a certain group, in a case where a sum of libidinal intensity would be greater within a smaller group).

The strength of the assemblage/node is nothing else but its potentiality to imprint itself in our cognition, to form a clear image of it. I already mentioned

the image of a node as the subject's *"embodiment of subjective perception"* of a place and it is the same with an image of assemblage. Marc Boumeester coins the term exo-identity for the image of a place, which clearly suggests that the identity is somehow external, alien to the place itself as it functions to some degree independently of it. He adds that it *"only exists on a meta-level, just like Times Square only exists in the image that we have of it. It does not contain a presence in the here and now, but it creates a set of values that can be filled with transferred experiences. Exo-identities are created over time and consist of expectations that need to be met, but will never actually truly fit the promise."[10]*

He explains that *"[m]uch of what is considered to be the expectancy of a built environment can be called its exo-identity. An exo-identity is a mental projection or an image of a place, with its specific aesthetics, localized culture, social behaviour, economic status, situational moxie etc."[11]* Building on that, all of the factors that comprise the projection, when intensified, they strengthen the image of a place, so that the node/assemblage we associate with a certain location will be more engraved in our cognition.

Transferring this to architectural praxis, I compiled a list of what can help in establishing a firm image of a place both for urban nodes and assemblages. What is important to remember is that node is a singular entity, while assemblage is a system of relations, which nodes are part of, so their intensity relies very much on each other.

Strengthening the Urban Nodes: service intensification, traffic intensification, architectural dominant, spatial qualities

9   Boumeester, Marc. (2021). Boumeester Place as an image image as a place.
10   Ibid.
11   Boumeester, M. (2023) "Technicity as the Montage Production of the Mundane" in *The Space of Technicity: Theorising Social, Technical and Environmental Entanglements*, eds. R. Gorny, S. Kousoulas, D. Perera and A. Radman. Lexington Books: Lanham, Maryland

Strengthening the Urban Assemblage: coherent spatiality, apparent connections between components, sensorial diversity, proliferation of architectural elements on the route

Now both of those can be considered doubly. First of all, they strengthen already existing images, but what is perhaps even more important is that they establish a potential for an assemblage/node to be formed, that is to be actualized by praxis. This splits the thinking about the city desirescape into two stratas that were already explained before, that is the virtual and its actualized counterpart the actual. The virtual desirescape is a field of potentialities of certain environments to strongly affect various users, being the material infrastructure of what is to be later actualized by praxis. The virtual desirescape determines the potential for actual sites of desires to exist. That is to say while examining cities one shall first assess the virtual potential, what already exists within the virtual of the place and then build upon this knowledge to establish new nodes that comprise intense assemblages – and this will be my praxis in the following project.

1. Cherish the Virtual Potential of the Site

2. Intensify Urban Assemblages & Nodes

3. Consider diverse Scales of the Project

4. Search for Surplus-life within the Subject's Body

5. Explore Affordances of Architecture

Finally, I will put all this theory into practice. From the abstract of words, I will move to the real of the material environment. I will use the theory of city cognition to identify spaces of desire and virtual desirescapes that can be actualized. This will be the base, the infrastructure so to say. Upon this I will try to establish a new economy, an economy based on common affects that absorbs the surplus vital energy circulating around the city. Most importantly it will not only be a singular place, but I aim to establish an ambience of common praxis, something more intangible, yet something that can transform a whole district identity. This will hopefully establish a place of collective practice where, re-phrasing Gramsci, the old is dying and the new can be born.[1]

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1   Gramsci, A. in The old is dying and the new cannot be born (yet). (2018, November 22). Retrieved January 9, 2023, from https://www.internationalhealthpolicies.org/blogs/the-old-is-dying-and-the-new-cannot-be-born-yet/

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