



0_1:// the hypertextu(r)al matrix

Abstract

Founded in 1995 LAB[au], laboratory for architecture and urbanism, links theoretic research *LAB[a+u]* to concrete works of conception and realisations *LA.BAU*.

LAB[au] elaborates a 'hyperdesign' investigating the implications of new technologies of communication and computation in spatiotemporal and social processes and their forms of representation as architecture and urbanism.

The transposition of the hypertext model to architectural and urban concepts question the mutation of the spatial and semantic construct of space. The definition of architecture as a code is based on 'glocal' systems according to the processes of computation and communication.

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Resumen

La implicación de la telecomunicación y de las tecnologías de información en el proceso de la producción y del conocimiento conduce a la revisión fundamental de la organización y de la definición del espacio. La tecnología basada en la transmisión y en el cómputo de la información lleva influencia en los modelos de organización (modos de la producción, del trabajo y del conocimiento), los procesos de la comunicación (código, símbolo) y las relaciones sociales, determinado en su relación al espacio. El desplazamiento de la articulación tradicional entre la información, el espacio y el tiempo conduce a la necesidad de transponer el mundo electrónico al espacio.

The increasing implication of communication and information technologies in the process of production, knowledge and culture leads to the fundamental re-thinking of the organization and definition of space. The technology based on the transmission and computation of information influences organizational models (**modes of production, work and knowledge**), the communication processes (code, symbol) and their social implication, particularly in their relation to the construct of space.

The networks of telecommunication generate the condensation of space: the direct access to information reconfigures the concept of proximity in terms of time rather than distance. The disappearance of the concept of 'territoriality' and the dematerialization of signs operated by these network, lead to the loss of economical, political, social and cultural signification of the local space in favor of new (less 'space' than 'information' related) identities and social cohesion models. As the condensation of space increasingly affects the definition of urbanity, the social model 'city', formerly static and localized, has now acquired a temporally dislocated condition – a support for events and information. In this manner, urban density is a mediated rather than architectural device, juggling with attraction by condensing information as its major condition. Therefore the shift of the traditional articulation between information, space and time leads to the increasing need to flatten the electronic realm to the **social and political one**.

As in all communication systems, the new technologies determine a transmission channel (signal - medium), a message (information) and a code. Yet, their specificity is to operate a reduction into a sequence of binary coding, in 0/1 or in bit/second on any type of information, including space. To the opposite of analog media where the information is physically recorded on a support, the digital medium introduces the transposition of all stable "form" into "inFORMation", transmittable and editable. Therefore, the 0/1 mode of communication flows and computation no longer only describes an electronic environment but becomes an important parameter of our conception and understanding of space and, particularly, of its signification. In that sense, Urbanism can no longer be obsessed with material 'appearance' and 'representation', but has to deal with dislocated, disembodied and transmissible systems. The classical question of articulating public and private space together, localizing boundaries and identifying built entities, is now a question of being in a dynamic space(s)-time(s) matrix of connectivity, interaction and imagination.

The comparison between communication modes (the hypertext) and spatial models (the city) questions the structural and semantic mutation of our environment according to its electronic extension.

The Hypertext is a system of interacting elements, an environment in continuous reconfiguration, determining a space-time experience of the digital medium. The hypertext is a mode structuring information, that relies on a 'meta-construction' essentially composed of coding/decoding and transfer processes. These processes determine the space of information, the network as a transmission device, weaving temporary interconnections, a space composed and decomposed by data and the flows which transport it.

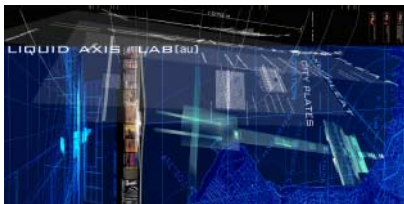


figure 1 – Liquid Axis <http://www.lab-au.com/liquid>



figure 2 – Transit(e) <http://www.lab-au.com/transit>

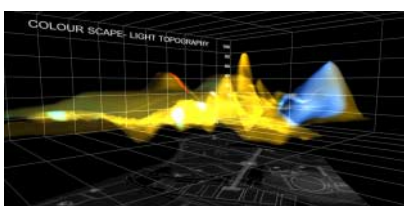


figure 3 – Lightscape(s) <http://www.lab-au.com/lightsc>

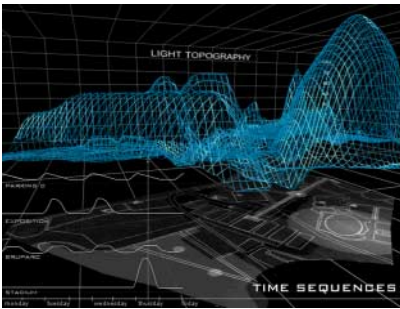


figure 4 – Lightscape(s)

By substituting the hierarchical conception of relations for a fragmentation into interactive systems (network), it transforms the perception and conception of our environment. The shift from text to hypertext, from analog to digital technology, replaces the notions of linearity, hierarchy and order with the notion of multilinearity structure, combination of fragments, coexistence of difference, generation of interaction and simultaneity of possibilities.

The hypertext has become the emblematic model of a reticular thinking, questioning the classical thinking, transforming the hierarchic conception of links into interacting fragmentary systems (networks), based on the complex modes of communication within the digital medium. The hypertext is a new synthesis of communication, technology and space, celebrating the transition from the structuralist thinking to a reflection in terms of systems.

Making a connection between the structures of information and the process of inFORMATION on the one hand, and the urban structures and flows of infrastructure on the other hand, opens to a better understanding of the relationship between space-time and information, its various influences on the social processes, and eventually, on their spatial formalization.

The transposition of the hypertext in texts, graphics and space becomes the factor introducing a new perception of space, affecting the existing spatio-temporal structures and their representations, or the activities that design them, such as architecture and urbanism. (LAB[au] 2000)

Projects

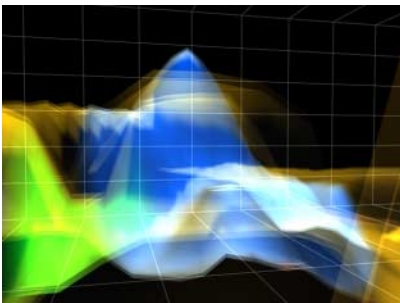


figure 5– Lightscape(s)

Liquid as the fusion of action and form, time and space, erases the static references of space. The different entities and programs of the project are not simply juxtaposed; they are flattened into a continuous mediated system. Conceived as a fluid network system - a circuit, the axis is transformed into a support absorbing and diffusing the new codes of representation. The urban condition therefore is defined as an hypertexture, a totally mediated environment where time (history and entropy), and space (geometric and topologic) fuse into a new construct.(figure1)

The title 'Transit(e)' is a combination of 'site' and 'transit' which stands for intermediary situations of an individual both spatially (being in-between two places) and physically, the condition of movement. The term reflects a particular state, between absence and presence, the belonging to an ephemeral condition.(figure2)

Transit(e) is a spatial concept where the static representation gives ground to sporadic situations of space-time according to the condition of the contemporary. In addition to mobility, the notion of Transit(e) also integrates the issue of connectivity, thus referring to a mental state. The new technologies place the human in an intermediary zone, a permanent condition of transition, allowing man to be here and potentially everywhere at the same time. The individual is projected into a 'nomadic' space-time popping from one virtuality - ambience to another. The new communication and information networks accentuate the differences of comprehension and practice of space, between local and global, domiciled and nomad. Therefore, the project investigates the issue of the public realm according to this trans_modern state of hypermobility.(figure3)

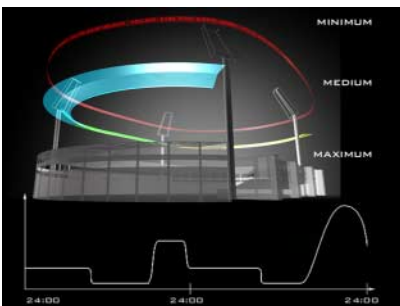


figure 6 – Lightscape(s)

Light_scape(s), is an urban study for the Heizel plateau, the world exhibition area of 1935 and 1958 in Brussels (B), which investigates the vector of light within the urban matrix. Throughout the development of a specific design tool, the project explores a new conception of lighting in the scale of the urban. The data-processed lighting plan, which by means of a spatial and temporal programming of light creates temporal lightscape(s). The project articulates the intervention of light as an urban vector exploiting the possibility of light being a structural as well as a temporal and interactive device. The conception of light within the urban outgrows the simple question of a practical and technical device of security and eventually becomes a polysemic medium broadened to the urban scale, the cultural dimension of the public realm. (figure 4, 5, 6)