

Resource Architecture – XXI World Congress of Architecture 22 to 26 July 2002 in Berlin

Forum 4 City-Landscape-Region

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Fasmland – Urban landscape in conditions of their disposal

Quotation about a woodcut by the painter Wolfgang Matheuer from 1973 entitled *„Hinter den sieben Bergen“* (beyond the seven hills): "We are constantly surrounded by technology, it has become part of our life. I don't think much of romantic, idyllic holiday landscapes, I prefer 'modern idylls'. I seek and find many ideas for my work in the immediate and at times powerful clash between nature and technology and in our response to it. In my opinion, this tension is crucial for our time, it reflects the complexity of the world we live in." We have passed this point a long time ago.

Fasmland one (*fast land*)

Brian Wilson wrote *Pet Sounds* in 1965. As a pop album, it represents an eccentric perception, in which apparent integrity is unmasked, destroyed and built up anew. *Pet Sounds* conveys a sense of fragmentation instead of synthesis. The integrity of the promised image is undermined, because the sounds are in opposition to each other, so that instead of being worn down, perception is deepened every time one hears the sounds again. The familiar image of the sun, girls and cars was dropped in favour of a diffuse mood which established its own frame of reference.

In this context, landscape is seen as a pictorial construction as opposed to landscape as a structure or a complex system – structures as well as systems generate images. Every action generates images – it refers to the given whole or to a specific individual atmosphere. Landscape is created through conflicting actions. It is a permanent process enabled through known or unknown overlapping intentions. Landscapes are subject to continuous interventions of the urban and of the half-life of planning paradigms involved in the process.

Urban landscape evolves from the so-called cultural landscape and from the city. It does not have a *genius loci*, ideas come only from external terms of reference. In the meantime, the urban exists only as an idea which could be anywhere, but it is no longer tied to a familiar image. Urban landscapes are places of experimentation with a permanent fuel feed. They follow interventions which are subject to disruptions and fashions. These facts are of no consequence for future action – one seeks the outside. The gap between everyday life and images from the past makes the new difficult to read. Paul Valéry wrote in 1894 in his *Leonardo* essay about concretised habits of language that have set up barriers around our perception: the terms referred to are "landscape" and "nature". Beautiful landscapes and the concept of nature have attained such control over our behaviour because we prefer looking at things through the spectacles of a lexicon to seeing them with our own eyes; by doing so we block off our view of the real (1).

Fas tland tw o (Scandinavian for m ainland)

As concepts, urban landscapes, intermediate landscapes or universal landscapes evoke different images forming a composite whole. They describe a kind of intermediate stage to be "in time". From this vantage point it is much easier to understand regional signs and to deal with them, because they are not historically connoted. Universality does not replace the search for places, it occupies places beyond one's home environment. The Swiss geographer Andreas Huber gives a good example of places with in universality. In his book entitled "Heimat in der Postmoderne" (home environment in the post-modern era), he describes how Swiss retirees construct their own home environment in the Spanish Costa Blanca. He says that home environment comes into being when one is in his "own time" (2).

Ferdinand Fellmann says that our behaviour is controlled not by concepts, but by images which we form of situations in which we find ourselves. Thus, images control behaviour as paradigms (3). He goes on to say that images are the sum of perceived elements in a landscape. They combine various elements to form aesthetic units. If landscape is created by action, then images are created by shaping circumstances. It is the act of shaping that follows various actions in space. Thus, an image is a consequence of the substance of these actions. The image is formed from conditions which create landscape images not defined in space. A landscape is a state and a wish.

A cultural landscape is perceived as a wish. It provides a retreat from false culture while asserting permanence, substance and sense. The planned image conceals fragmentation and blends the image into a utopia by tapping into something that appears to have been there all along. A landscape is thus divested of its historically negotiated compensatory function, because an outside is no longer there. Compensation becomes an aesthetic mask, landscape planning always relating to compensation.

Planing is a form of technical action in which landscape is rendered effective with one's own means that are available. This includes conserving images typifying cultural spaces. Landscape planing systematises the use of traditional landscapes and their associated uses without those images that would necessarily result from new intentions. Simulations of a new landscape are created which lack an economic basis and live from subsidies. Planing creates weak images and constructs "anti-worlds". It can only minimise effected interventions and must capitulate as a creator of future development.

By charging collective longing, cultural landscapes become something whose intentions have passed. But reality is different: Landscape is not only something that is already there and that consequently is only protected and modified. Since it represents a way of thinking and is therefore not constant, it needs to be imagined and designed.

In this connection it would be too simple to maintain that planning is conservative. The problem of planning consists in the mode of its simulation and authenticity. It creates redundancy by using serial images that claim a perfect past.

Slow land

Landscapes can be described as the authentic result of actions on the one hand, and as the result of simulation on the other. Simulation is the result of an intended creation of authenticity. In connection with the intermediate town discourse, Augustin Berque wrote in 1990 that in the final analysis, a simulation of authenticity is part of the awareness of a place in the post-modern era. He claims that the post-modernist Arcadia ideals are giving way to a new mode of perception of the "discovery of the ugly" as a positive aesthetic category (4).

But this kind of perception is circular. It is not about simulation vs. reality or about broken aesthetics, but about the emergence of boredom, which is a kind of patina that destroys the charm of the simulated. The images become redundant and confront one with an aesthetic sequence: from the authentic to the simulated to boredom and finally to an ironic quotation. Barnett Newman wrote in his famous article "the sublime is now", that we change materials the way objects fit in a particular place and then call this sublime – but our actions are only an upgrading of the so-called field.

What remains is a constant production of boredom. The collected postcards of Martin Parr show the sudden change from novelty to boredom (5). They stand for a different, a light perception. They show everyday culture and a predilection for the unnatural and exaggeration. They arouse longings for a landscape which does not always require its meaning to be questioned, which is not exposed to the production of anti-worlds. Martin Parr shows what happens when progressive images coat patina. An outside comes into being inside and an escape into "culture" is withdrawn. The landscape becomes an utopian screen for future purposes and a superabundance of images: places whose representation and complexity renders clear classification impossible. Boredom and superabundance complement each other, since neither communicates unequivocal images and hence prompts to future actions.

Fas tland th ree (*alm os t land already*)

Landscapes are fraught with meanings. Gottfried Boehm differentiates between powerful and weak images. A powerful image gives work. It operates metabolism with reality. Powerful images show us something that we would not know without them. They provoke action and are engendered by it.

Images which unequivocally depict familiar intentions and tie them to places are an example of images that are not powerful. They are weak images coming from direct representation of the known. Their weakness is the result of negation of their intrinsic value and of the precedence of the pictorial alignment with the represented (6). Current discourses will despair in their search for a landscape attuned to the times if future intentions represent an excessively unequivocal and hence weak image.

An image which evokes a corresponding action with a landscape and which goes beyond a mere recording of elements calls for the construction of a melancholic type of design. In response to the loss of cultural landscape, the utopian type of design tried to design a new one – whereas the melancholic one designs places in response to the loss of integrity. In this sense, the design process can no longer rely on the establishment of traditional images. The perception of an unfamiliar landscape requires a view that comprises, in equal measure, the prejudice and the action-oriented comment on the place – in the sense of powerful images, which as landscape units categorise wishes and decisions in terms of that which is given. Thus, overdraw ing the context opens the possibility of experimentation.

There is no special demand on the landscape, there are only different players with various inquiries with regard to the landscape. In this connection, landscape must become a disposable product by differentiating landscapes and potential users can fall back on the landscape of their interest. Landscape attains a value whose reduction would diminish the interest in this landscape. Landscape must be able to instrumentalise a space in the sense of the intended purpose, which is disposal. This would reflect neither the disunity of the landscape, nor attempt harm oniously to cancel it, but continue building.

- (1) see: Jaus, Hans Robert: Kleine Apologie der ästhetischen Erfahrung. In: Stühr, Jürgen (publ.): Ästhetische Erfahrung heute. Cologne 1996
- (2) see: Huber, Andreas: Heimat in der Postmoderne. Zürich 1999, p. 258-259
- (3) see: Fellmann, Ferdinand: Symbolischer Pragmatismus – Hermeneutik nach Dilthey. Hamburg 1991, p. 51
- (4) see: 3. Internationales Architekturkolloquium an der Bergischen Universität Wuppertal: Internationales Kolloquium Stadtlandschaft 1997
- (5) Collection Martin Parr: Langweilige Postkarten. Berlin 2001
- (6) see: Boehm, Gottfried: Zuwachs an Sein – Hermeneutische Reflexion und bildende Kunst. In: Kliser, Bernd (publ.): Hans-Georg Gadamer – Die Moderne und die Grenze der Vergegenständlichung. Munich 1996, p. 95 – 125