The Private, The Public and The Common:

What Spaces Do?
ABSTRACT

Frequently compelled by their knowledge and governance legislations, architects act as agents of expertise and impose top down solutions, in the form of fixed typologies, to bottom up and often temporary problems. Together with the fact that, in a fast paced, open source and migrating society, we still rely on the public-private dichotomy, results in the prematurely termination of any spatial emergent affordances.

In order to adapt to the new social and cultural shift, architecture needs to arrest the terms of public and private and embrace a new spatial ontology that arises out of the Spinozian *natura naturans* and not *natura naturata*. The present paper investigates the possibility of achieving such an alteration in the design of spaces, through the use of a transcendental and phaseal common realm.

keywords: assemblage theory, field conditions, intra-action, public, private, common.
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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

All architecture is shelter, all great architecture is the design of space that contains, cuddles, exalts, or stimulates the persons in that space.

— Philip Johnson

Space has always been the spiritual dimension of architecture. It is not the physical statement of the structure so much as what it contains that moves us.

— Arthur Erickson

The journey into architecture practice starts with the most basic elements and notions from this domain. One of the fundamental theories is, without any doubt, properly defining the concept of Newtonian space. Pritzker Prize winner, Philip Johnson and many of his peers share the same vision in regard to this concept, that space is a container that acts upon what it contains. Taking this theory as the ultimate answer to “What is space?” as opposed to “What spaces do?”, we start questioning whether space would still exist or come into existence if there was nothing to be contained, given that ‘What is?’ comprises an essentialist query.

Defining space seems like a long and endless journey, one that has started long before the characterization of the architectural practice. The Greek philosopher Aristotle defined space as a series of containers, which cover everything that is to
be found within the ‘limits of the sky’ to the very smallest element.¹ This leads us to the idea that empty space is non-existent; there is an infinity of spaces, where every element has a position (stable or unstable). The problem that this theory poses is that space becomes a predefined and objectified entity, a package whose solely purpose is to contain and categorize. Philosopher Erin Manning presents this system as our neurotypical propensity to chunk interactions into encoded subjects and objects relations, a point that will bear further discussion.²

In order to combat the diminishing of the spatial entity, the architecture practice has assigned different typologies to the spatial envelopes in accordance to function, thus, creating the illusion of identity and false purpose. This modernist techno-utopian deterministic propensity of architecture would become most famous through the dictum: ‘form follows function’. Nevertheless, even if the sides were turned and both architects and philosophers began to think from the contra form, from the material yet incorporeal to the materialized content, the latter yet again was being crystallized into the inevitably definition of a container of functions. Thus, no matter how we perceive it, space will always be a paradox in its own definition, as long as we assign to it the determination of shelter.

Hidden between the lines of Aristotle’s definition, there is an idea that could allow us to see spatial interpretation beyond the traditional form and counter-form. Space can only play the role of container if elements are present. Thus, whenever there are no elements, space becomes obsolete. In regard to this matter, Environment-Behavior Studies cofounder and architect, Amos Rapoport, presents space as the effect of the elements that it contains, their relationship and interactions.³ This fundamentally different way of thought is the first step towards a better understanding and definition of space. It does not present the physical properties of space as a required element. For this reason, space could also be

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metaphysically described, as the outcome of relations, as the Canadian architect, Arthur Erickson, conveyed.4

The confrontation between the theories of container versus relational space has been debated within the field of physics long before being discussed within the architectural frame. The relational theory, as polymath and philosopher, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, envisioned it, poses a metaphysical idea of space, defining it as a sum of relations, which would cease to exist if matter disappeared.5 His view comes as a contradiction to the description of space that supports the container theory, which was by that time reinforced by the French philosopher Descartes. The aforementioned theory presents the metaphysical concept of space as a background, in which matter rests and moves, given the fact that without matter it can continue as a void. Descartes did not fully acknowledge the void within nature; however, he did not deny it due to the lack of better means of investigation.6 These two other physics metaphysical theories about the container and relational space have the role to exemplify the challenging task of correctly defining space. Now we can also equally say about the relational space, as proposed by Rapoport and envisioned by Erickson, that it could not come into existence or exist without matter, which fosters relations. Given that the theories proposed both by philosophers and architects result in a paradoxical representation of space, it could be that we challenge the notion of space from the wrong perspective. It might be that it is not a matter of how space is created, but more a matter of what does space imply. It is time to challenge the traditional ontology of spaces.

In 1980, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Felix Guattari present their second volume of Capitalism and Schizophrenia, under the name of A Thousand Plateaus. This second book, as the translator Brian Massumi presents, is a “constructive experiment in schizophrenic, or ‘nomad’, thought.”7 The

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5 Clarke Samuel et al., The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence: Together with Extracts from Newton’s Principia and Opticks, (Manchester: Manchester University, 1956).
In his recent article, the architect Gokhan Kodalak distinguishes three different networks that act within the field of architecture. The networks of authority, embodied by bureaucratic and administrative actors, the networks of expertise, which consist of engineers, scholars and architects, and networks of performances that consist of actors who have to accept and submissively experience the top down decision making of the other two networks. In Fig. 1, the cartoon presented in the November 1920 edition of Punch, a situation of negotiation, between the client and the architect, is depicted. The client asks, “I've got a thousand pounds and I want to build a house”, the architect responds: “I'm afraid it can't be done. You'll require fifteen thousand to build a house at that place”. The architect appeals to his knowledge (agent of expertise) in order to guide the client's vision (agent of consumption). What is striking is not the act of negotiation itself, but the fact that the architect negotiates from a position of power. The artist behind the drawing portrayed, in a most creative manner, the high pedestal on which the architect delusionally places himself. The client is drawn as a shy and humble figure, whereas the architect, behind his desk covered in plans and drawings, is depicted in a position of haughtiness.

The extrapolation of past theories has never been proven as a good solution for present problems. This has been observed by the many science disciplines. Now we do know that the world is not a flat round plate, but a sphere, that space and time have multiple dimensions, that the human body can function artificially, etc. Societies are continuously changing, merging and diverging from old projected theories. We find ourselves in an open source cultural revolution, in which architecture does not seem to be able to keep up. This is mostly due to the fact that architecture has been looked upon as the result of a culture, instead of being a mechanism of culture itself. Architecture is able to function on its own, not depending on the situation. It is an epiphylogenetic entity that embeds traces of former culture into our own fabric. This makes architecture the perfect example, illustrating that time is a dimension, which cannot be reduced to the mere canonical definition of past, present and future. Through architecture we can see that the past is coextensive with the present, which also has an impact on the future. All the theories that we might propose, all the existing buildings that are also used for study purposes influence present architectural decisions and future trends.

Starting with the Renaissance movement, architecture practice has worked its way from a culture of creation to a culture of expertise. We find ourselves in social observations, by Deleuze and Guattari, are going to be later crystalized by philosopher Manuel DeLanda in his books and lecture series about the Assemblage theory. This theory implies a new way of thought that presents a sum of elements as an irreducible and decomposable whole. If we were to extrapolate this to the field of architecture within the realm of spatial genesis, we would then possibly be able to express space through its emergent properties rather than the autocratic ones. This could result in a new spatial identity that could foster the modern fast paced, open source social culture.
a present situation where spatial designers, compelled by their knowledge and governance legislation, impose top down solutions, in the form of fixed typologies, to bottom up and frequently temporary problems. As agents of creation, they have the set idea that they need to create and define space; as agents of expertise, they dogmatically enforce the idea. The issue that appears is not one of empowerment, but one of inadequate conceptualisation and definition of space. Most of the agents of creation still use the typological container definition in order to create space. Thus, the resulting architectural design acquires a predefined image and purpose and additionally, a label of private or public. As discussed earlier, society is shifting, the borders between private and public are fading and container solutions need to become incredibly flexible. In consequence, top down solutions become obsolete over a short period of time. Pritzker Prize winner, Paulo Mendes da Rocha, presents in his interview with Annette Spiro, the notion of private within the metaphysical world. In his view, private space cannot be physically embodied, what we experience outside the mind are just variable levels of publicness:

“All space must be attached to a value, to a public dimension. There is no private space. The only private space that you can imagine is the human mind.”

This theory places less pressure on the intricate discourse between the public and the private domains. When having to work with only variances of public, the translation to a spatial definition becomes less complex and is being led only by agents of governance. Nevertheless, the issue that arises is that the embodied design solutions receive yet again a top-down character. Furthermore, by limiting the private realm to the cognitive abilities of the individual, we would inevitably limit his exteriority relations with the physical world and consequently, restrain and even prematurely terminate any emergent affordances. This is why instead of tracing a

clear-cut barrier between private and public, we should consider empowering the in-between gray area, the common. Therefore, the search for private and public becomes obsolete; the issue should no longer be how can we embody space for the two realms, but how can we perceive space in order to stimulate the common. However, we should be mindful of the fact that the action of perceiving should not be associated to any physical attributes of space; this would distort the notion of common and become yet another top-down solution. Therefore, the common should not be seen as a typological label, but as a result of the assemblage of the interiority and exteriority relations of the parts that constitute it. As discussed earlier, this can be done by avoiding the mentality of what is space and adopt the mentality of what space does?
Chapter Two

ASSEMBLAGE OF THE COMMON

The assemblage theory, presented by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and eventually expanded by Manuel DeLanda, is portrayed within an extensive diversity of wholes, composed from heterogeneous entities. They range from the atomic molecular scale to living organisms, ecosystems etc. Nevertheless, when applied to social entities, DeLanda points out that it is then possible to remove the nature-culture divide. Thus, by realizing this break in this traditional dichotomy we are then able to explain the synthesis and ontology of every analysed system free of a totalitarian confined prejudice. For the field of architecture this means that spaces could transcend their Cartesian nature and embrace their identity as a part of the network of social entities, which as DeLanda clarifies in the introduction of A new philosophy of society, “are clearly not mind-independent.” Thus, the first step that has to be taken is presenting spaces as a socius and do this not through a physical and palpable embodiment, but through a transcendental realm of capacities, in other words, the virtual.

The following chapter is meant as a guide towards achieving this step. Nevertheless, it should not be looked upon as conclusive or categorical, but more as an introduction to a way of thought that could lead to a reimagining of the ontology of spaces within the design process.

For many years, organic totality, as proposed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in the Science of Logic, posed as the unique translation tool for autonomous wholes. The totalitarian way of thought was based on relations of interiority, which stated that the elements constituting the whole once the whole is established, have no independent existence anymore. Thus, if you would disjoin them, they would lose the properties that they possessed within the whole. Therefore, it is intriguing to see that totality has emergent properties, although it is not decomposable.

14 Ibid.,1.
16 Liviu Paicu, MAN-HORSE-STIRRUP representation, based on original drawing found at http://farm9.staticflickr.com/8425/7663862222_2ebf44e5e8_o.jpg. (DelB, 2015).
When these terms become components of the man-horse-stirrup assemblage, they become more than the sum of the three. By interacting with each other they stimulate a new machine, with emergent properties that are not reducible to the individual parts. By being on the horse, the speed of the warrior increases, thus, positively influencing the force with which he can strike with his weapon, resulting in a more harmful effect; an effect, which could not be reduced to any of the components in particular.

In order to provide a contrasting view to the Hegelian totalities, the assemblage theory presents the whole that is not of the parts, but alongside them. An entity that has emergent properties and is therefore, irreducible. Nonetheless, it is at the same time also decomposable. The decomposability of an assemblage is explained by DeLanda with the help of relations of exteriority. These are relations in which the parts interact with one another. However, they retain their identity and can be detached and attached into other assemblages.

Emergent properties, as explained by John Stuart Mill in *System of Logic*, are properties of a whole that are born from perpetual interaction of its components. Within this interaction, the parts must employ their capacities. Nevertheless, the capacities that the parts exercise are not *a priori*, but are the result of the interaction. Without the interaction and capacities of components, there would be no emergent properties.

It is important to understand that Aristotle previewed the world as a presegmented whole, with eternal segments/components. Deleuze does not entirely disagree with the world of segmentation, he acknowledges segmentation, however only as an emergent solution to ontological problems that arise from circumstances not requiring any segmentation. Thus, our reality is segmented, but starting smooth and then becomes segmented into segments that are not eternal.

As DeLanda explains:

> The ontological problems are defined by topological invariants: the number of dimensions of a space of possibilities, its connectivity, and its universal singularities. As these ontological problems undergo a process of actualization they become progressively differentiated into a multiplicity of actual solutions. This differentiation proceeds in a fully historical way, and may only reveal a portion of the possibility space at a time."
Furthermore, besides being a whole, which is irreducible and decomposable, the assemblage is also additionally defined by three dimensions of operation. Firstly, an assemblage is composed of material and expressive components. Secondly, the level of stability of an assemblage identity is defined by lines of territorialization and deterritorialization. Thirdly, the level of rigidity of an assemblage identity is measured through lines of coding and decoding. In order to undermine duality and create a clearer picture of assemblages, DeLanda finally sketches a new image for the assemblage; assemblage 2.0, as he presents it, as a node that constitutes of two parameters namely, level of formed matter (territorialization) and level of structured function (coding). In this way, he defines assemblage as a whole that at a given moment in possibility time, has a certain phase, which is dictated by the position of the parameters, see Fig. 3.

Figure 3: Representation of DeLanda’s Assemblage 2.0 Theory

If we would extrapolate the assemblage definition of DeLanda within the architectural praxis, we could define the following:

A highly territorialized and coded set of spaces would have as result what we now call private domain. This is because a Phase 1 Assemblage has very sharply defined borders of predefined and preordained interactions, exactly as we would define spaces that belong to the private domain. Imagine the supermarket; there are always spaces, where unauthorized users are not allowed to enter, nor interact with. While authorized users, ranging from the lowest function to the

highest, are allowed to cross the threshold and interact, nevertheless, within the boundaries of the pre-coded set of conduct assigned to their function. Within the same supermarket there are also spaces where all users can interact within a certain degree of freedom, with other users and the environment. We know this as the public spaces section of the supermarket and seeing how the spaces are still territorialized, but the components interaction is less coded, we could then assign it to the Phase 2 Assemblage.

We have to keep in mind that this crude portrayal is an approximation of an otherwise, idyllic representation. Spaces cannot be continuously linked to one phase; irrefutably, in time, the phases express a continuous modulation due to different social and economic factors, and thus, we can only extrapolate assemblage within one of the possibility space at a time. By means of new coding, be it voluntarily, involuntarily or even by changes within the expressive or material components, when being actualized, the territorialization parameter will output a different data set.

Figure 4: Representation of DeLanda’s Assemblage 2.0 Theory applied to the Built Environment

We are now left with Phase 3. Many disciplines contiguous to architecture try to push the modern culture towards the development of a deterritorialized and low coded society. The result they expect is an independent self-aware, self-sustained and geocentric model of humanity. Within architecture Phase 3 has become somewhat of “the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow” and we call it the Common domain. Some may argue that the common should not be a phase and in fact, receive the title of a threshold and become the threshold between Phases 1

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and 2. However, by doing this, we would then acknowledge the fact that, in the real practical world, these two phases do indeed have highly territorialized borders and as discussed earlier, this is not actually the case. In order to abolish the problem that arises with the fluctuation in phases and achieve a gradual segmentation, as Deleuze described, we should actually arrest the terms of Public and Private. We could then create, based on the model of Assemblage 2.0, a succession of Common.

![Assemblage 2.0 Diagram](image.png)

**Figure 5:** Representation of DeLanda's Assemblage 2.0 Theory applied to the Built Environment, resulting in a succession of Common realms.25

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25 Liviu Paicu, *Diagram Image 'the succession of Commons'* (Delft, 2015).

Chapter Three

THERE IS NO “ONE TRUE COMMON”

The resulting product of an architectural design cannot simply be expressed, like discussed in the introduction, through the container or relational space theories. Not only architects, but all agents of creation should learn how to cope with the fact that once the design leaves from the realm of the metaphysical and receives a physical interpretation, no matter how coded and territorialized the design was intended to be, by pure interaction with its environment and vice versa, it starts to lose some of its boundaries. This is caused by the fact that the mind is exclusive and irreducible. This is not a plea for accounting, within the design, for every unique individual that would come into contact with the final product. It is mere an obvious statement that in order to comprehend the true potential of spaces, we need to step within the design and virtually envision the interactions before we envision the boundaries. This might seem logical and some may claim that it is even normal; nevertheless, it is not a universally embraced method. Due to legislations, costs, demands of clients, planning commissions and so many other factors that top-down influence the design decisions, we, as architects, tend to step out of the design and calculate empathically inapt volumes that should fulfill the wishes of all the involved parties. This is where economic and ecological sustainability clash with social sustainability, all because architects are, within all the agents of creation, the most influential fortunetellers. Spaces, be it on micro or macro scale, out of the whole variety of design portrayals, tend to last the longest and most influence the future, consequently, present, past and then inevitably yet again, the future of society. Thus, we may identify future trends, but we can never fully predict the realm of the human mind. What we can do is introduce it as the main design parameter from the beginning of the design process. In order to achieve this proposed methodology we need to reverse engineer, by way of the assemblage theory, our entire way of
designing a space and set the basis for a new spatial ontology. In order to create a more palpable assemblage anatomization, the use of a case study will be implied. One of the best candidates for the process is the now famous concept for the Jussieu Library, designed by the architectural firm OMA:

“To reassert its credibility, we imagine the surface of the parvis as pliable: a social magic carpet. We fold it to form a stack of platforms, which is then enclosed to become a building, which may be read as the culmination of the Jussieu network.

These new surfaces - a vertical, intensified landscape - are then ‘urbanized’ almost like a city: the specific elements of the libraries are reimplemented in the new public realm like buildings in a city. Instead of a simple stacking of one floor on top of the other, sections of each floor are manipulated to connect with those above and below. In this way a single trajectory traverses the entire structure like a warped interior Boulevard. The visitor becomes a Baudelairean flaneur, inspecting and being seduced by a world of books and information and the urban scenario.”26

Although the OMA design principle never stated that the office aimed for the creation of a fluent phased transcendence of the common, the final design product succeeds just in that. The design implies a high level of gradual segmentation by introducing the idea of morphing elements from the macro into the micro scale. This may pose a problem to the analysis process. When implying the interaction of the components within the ‘Jussieu network’, we find it difficult to analyze it through the normal spectrum. This is because, as DeLanda explains, on a micro scale, the assemblage can be studied without its spatial relations. Nevertheless, when moving to larger scales, the relations become a crucial part for the components interaction. This is why he uses the term of ‘regionalized locale’, proposed by

sociologist Anthony Giddens, to investigate built environment assemblages. By locale we define the embodied region, which is connected to a specific milieu of interaction. The region has defined borders, in which a common identity, but not a concrete one, is formed. Regionalization overcomes the notion of placement in space and implies delimitation of time-space relative to common social habits and practices. Therefore, through the following chapters of the paper, the terms local and regionalization will be used in order to create a more accurate exploration of the built environment assemblages.

The first step into the analysis of an assemblage is to understand what are the material and expressive components. The primary components that partake in the assemblage with a material role, are the load bearing ones. Thus, in the case of Jussieu, this would be the beams, structural floors and eventually, structural walls. The succeeding material components are those that make possible the connectivity between the regions of the locale, such as doors, windows, hallways, staircases and lifts. Nevertheless, these components also contribute to the body of expressive components. In some cases, connectivity elements can transcend the border between material and expressive. This is mostly on account of the fact that the way in which we interact with the built environment has tremendously changed during the last decades. Every major change has been brought by new innovations. Imagine the time before the horizontal spaces. The action was placed within a two dimensional axis. We observed, acknowledged and interacted with the surroundings only within a one layered horizontal field. Once we were able to elevate above the one layer, new spatial properties were made available. New type of regionalization and consequently, circulation within the locales was made possible. One of the most ‘common’ elements that caused these new capacities was the staircase. With the help of the stairs, the action could now unfold within a third dimensional axis. The stairs also brought a new way of switching between

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assemblage phases. If we were to preview locales in a Cartesian system, the stairs allowed for regionalization in height. Consequently, we could say that they exercise a certain degree of territorializing capacities; nevertheless, when placed in a 3-dimensional coordinates system, the stairs create a homogeneity of the regionalized locale, thus, deterritorializing the assemblage. A second very important phase transcending material and expressive component, is the elevator. The introduction of the elevator within the built environment allowed for further vertical expansion, but also strong territorialization. Such as Koolhaas portrays it in *Delirious New York:*

“Emerging from the elevator on the ninth floor, the visitor finds himself in a dark vestibule that leads directly into a locker room that occupies the center of the platform, where there is no daylight. There he undresses, puts on boxing gloves and enters an adjoining space equipped with a multitude of punching bags (occasionally he may even confront a human opponent).

On the southern side, the same locker room is also serviced by an oyster bar with a view over the Hudson River. *Eating oysters with boxing gloves, naked, on the nth floor* - such is the “plot” of the ninth story, or, the 20th century in action.”

The elevator broke the deterritorialized regions created by the stairs, now you could go from one floor to another without passing through other floors. This did not mean that the interaction with the passed floors disappeared, but it merely evolved and consequently, brought with it new emergent capacities for the different regions of the locale. This shift between capacities is where the true power of an assemblage is being recorded, namely, its decomposability. The connectivity elements have been intentionally morphed in order to create a highly

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deterritorialized whole. If Rem Koolhaas would have opted for a design that involved primarily the use of hallways, doors, stairs and elevators, the end result would have shifted towards other levels of territorialization and consequently, resulted into different assemblage phases. Furthermore, the stability of the assemblage identity can also be influenced by a change in the routine. This means that if the library incorporated at one point more offices, or opened a museum branch within one of the regions, the rhythm of the entire locale could shift. Due to the high degree of freedom in what decomposability is concerned, the Jussieu library could easily accept new rhythmic shifts.

The remaining analysis dimension is the level of coding of the library. By mimicking the urban environment through the use of the expressive components, Koolhaas succeeds in removing the necessity for superfluous coding.

“Through its scale and variety, the effect of the inhabited planes becomes almost that of a street, a theme which influences the interpretation and planning of the Boulevard as part of a system of further supra-programmatic urban elements in the interior: plazas, parks, monumental staircases, cafes, shops.”31

In this way, the user component is gradually introduced from a macro to micro scale, while the interactions are kept almost at the same level. Summarizing, the Jussieu library could be depicted as the portrait of the Ideal Common domain. This, of course, without accounting for the fact that the ‘settings of interaction’ are bound to the ‘contextuality’ of a library. If this happened and the concept reached the palpable world, the Jussieu library assemblage would have had a more predominant Phase 1/2 identity. This is also what OMA came to understand when the office received a commission from the Seattle Public Library to design a new

building for the central Seattle library. The resulting design was a locale that is mostly prototyped around the concept of the Jussieu library, only with a different assemblage identity.

The Seattle library was for OMA a visual manifesto on the reaction against the culture of exclusivity. They realized that the digitalization of information and media was no more a matter of possibility, but a very irrefutable and hastily approaching matter of time. The proposed design was an assemblage where the simultaneity of all forms of media could be nourished. This made them realize that territorialisation should not be done through a traditional open plan, but through a free-plan and that the coding should be made variable and dependent on future emergent interactions and capacities. In theory, this is very similar to the design credo that OMA has established throughout its vast years of practice. Consequently, the main concept presents an assemblage that is low coded and low territorialized, thus, a phase 3 Common. Nevertheless, as architect and founder of REX, Joshua Prince-Ramus stated in his TED lecture, Behind the design of Seattle’s library, the proposed design strategy shied away from the notion of a low territorialized and low coded space, or as he names it, high modernist flexibility. Instead of creating a generic “shotgun flexibility” and get rid of the “ambiguous flexibility”, they opted to chunk the library assemblage into different smaller assemblages, each with a specific set of territorialisation and coding values. In order to not create a static stacked traditional functionality, they allowed each assemblage to maintain a low territorialisation level around its borders. What is interesting is that they divided the assemblages into two parts; “five platforms and four flowing ‘in between’ planes”. This Miesian and Corbusian dichotomy is mostly notable within the work of OMA. The platforms provide the stage of performance for the predictable or stable interactions, while the planes allow for low coded interaction.

As we can see from one of the proposal diagrams (figure 5), OMA chunked the moderate to high coded regions (represented in grey) in order to create a hybridization of assemblage phases. Although they state that these are the stable regions, the resulting locales have a low coded identity. This is mainly because of the fluctuation in the level of coding within them. It is very hard to stabilize them within a fixed phase. They are neither a phase 1, nor a phase 2. The same is to be said about the residual/in between space (represented in yellow), which fluctuates between phase 2 and 3. Nevertheless, these later regions were intentionally identified as low coded. The way in which the two different transcendent phases are discerned from one another is ingeniously done by the way of material components. OMA uses a visible and direct transportation component in the form of escalators to allow for the passage through the phase 2/3 region. For the phase 1/2 regions, they use a contra flow strategy. The transportation components are not directly rendered visible; they pose a more coded character. This allows for a low territorialization between the dichotomy of the two phases within the building.

Therefore, in principle, the Seattle library is an assemblage that consists not of congregated fixed phases, but of transcendental in between phases, which permit a high degree of uncoded interaction between its components. Thus, a DeLanda assemblage diagram of the Seattle library would look like the following diagram:

![Diagram of DeLanda's Assemblage 2.0 Theory applied to the Seattle library.](image)

If we analyze and compare this diagram with the first three fixed phases diagram, we can observe that the need of a threshold becomes excessive. This is explained by the fact that OMA does not treat the threshold as an entity, but as a device that fulfills multiple functions at the same time. Thus, the components that are within the threshold transcend past their geometrical attributes and expose emergent affects, allowing them to tweak the level of coding and territorialisation.

The resulting theory is not that the stable phases (phase 1, 2 and 3) are indispensable, neither that the threshold, as an entity, should be discarded. On the contrary, in order to have full working assemblages we need all the presented phases. What needs to be understood is that it is the ability to change from one phase to another that enforces an assemblage. In addition, the level of the phases is not hierarchical. We should not imagine the process of change as one of mechanization (such as a switch), but as one of evolution or regression because the morphing from one phase to another is done through the interconnection of the borders that the phases share. This means that the transcendence of the phases is
an immanent process, starts from within the phase and depending on the variables that determine the mutation, changes the phase nature. In other words, we could relate an architectural assemblage to a rhizomatic process. The rhizome, besides being a root-like subterranean stem, is a philosophical concept that was proposed by Deleuze and Guattari. In A thousand Plateaus, they presented a contrasting concept to the binary arborescent system. The concept implies the six principles. The first two are the principles of connection and heterogeneity. These principles state that a rhizome allows and stimulates its connectivity to other elements through any point of access. The third principle is the one of Multiplicity. It is with this principle that through the concept of trans-species mutualism, different entities could interact together to form a unity that is multiple in itself. This means that multiplicities shy away from the notion of object-subject. In fact, multiplicities are to be understood as the entirety of magnitude and dimensions, whose corporeal transformation cannot be achieved without its incorporeal transformation. Furthermore, they are defined by the outside; their deterritorialization is what engenders the connection with other multiplicities and, as a quasi-cause, the change in their nature. The final three principles, the principle of asignifying rupture, the principle of cartography and decalcomania, enforce the rhizome ability for unopposed connectivities by stating that, if shattered, a rhizome would start again from one of its old or new lines and that a rhizome is not based upon any structural or generative model, but it is to be understood as a map, which can be read from any direction. Thus, the architectural assemblage could be deduced as a rhizome that encompasses a multitude of multiplicities or phases in our case. This means that each phase in its uniqueness bares a certain level of connectivity with the other phases, the factors of its connectivity being influenced by the dimensions of territorialization and coding. As a quasi-cause, it stimulates a porous fluid transcendence, which results in a continuous threshold; hence, all phases of the assemblage become thresholds.

36 Ibid., 28-29.
37 Ibid., 29-30.
38 Ibid., 30-35.
Therefore, it eliminates the problem of specific definition of what a phase should be and it brings forth the process of defining and relating the variables that govern the phase’s mutation and consequently, identity.
Now that we recognize what composes the regionalized locale assemblages, we only need to determine what makes them irreducible. As discussed, the irreducibility is due to the fact that the assemblage components constantly interact with each other and consequently, breed emergent properties; properties that in turn, possess quasi-casual power. Therefore, how do we, as agents of creation, who work most of our time with the quantifiable world, can account for the force of interaction?

A theory that could bring us closer to understanding the abstract realm of nonphysical interaction is the theory proposed by architect Stan Allen. In his book, *Points + Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City*, Allen presents the theory of the field conditions. These are any formal or spatial milieus that are able to assemble diverse elements in a whole, without infringing upon their identity. He does not specifically use the term of an assemblage to identify his theory. Nevertheless, the field conditions bare a high similarity to the Deleuzian theory. The field configurations are organized on two axes based on porosity and local interconnectivity, exactly as how assemblages are defined by territorialisation and coding. Allen, as well, places within his theory very low interest on the profile and extent, while at the same time, he emphasizes the internal relationships of the components, which govern the behavior of the field. However, the field conditions do not present phases of aggregation; instead they are unstable bonds that are unable to produce a systematic spatial ontology. This property can be observed when we analyze the terms that compose the theory.

Firstly, a field within the realm of physics is a physical quantity that contains a value for every point defined within a space/time frame. In other words, it is an

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40 Ibid., 92-102.
analysis tool used in order to express the relation of the analyzed components. For example, if we analyze the earth through a magnetic field we observe that there are basically two magnetically active forces, the north and south poles. When we apply the filter of the gravitational field we observe Sir Isaac Newton’s theory of attraction force between a pair of massive bodies, or gravity. Earth atmospheric electrical fields describe the electrical charges and discharges in atmosphere and so on. Conclusively, as physicist John Archibald Wheeler explains in a more modern structure, a field subjugates space, it has an energetic quantity and the presence of a field is capable of denying the occurrence of a true vacuum. This last part is truly important when we migrate the theory towards the architecture practice. That is because, as discussed earlier, if Aristotelian and/or Descartes vacuum occurs, then architecture in its pure irreducible and decomposable way, ceases to exist. This may also explain why Stan Allen uses the description of Sanford Kwinter to frame his theory.

“The field describes a space of propagation, of effects. It contains no matter or material points, rather functions, vectors and speeds. It describes local relations of difference within fields of celerity, transmission or of careering points, in a word, what Minkowski called the world.”

The definition resembles in a way, the one of the locales, where the regionalized space of propagation provides the setting of interaction. The extra added property of the field is the one of continuum interaction, also known as non-organic life. As matter does not play the most important role anymore, spaces do not stop from functioning when material components are being removed. This not only creates a fluent transition in the field’s phases, but also allows non-corporeal components to become actors within the space of propagation. By non-corporeal components, one could imagine elements such as wind, light, water, fog, smoke, and also sound and physical vibrations.

As Stan Allen theorizes in his book Points + Lines, Field Conditions are bottom-up phenomena, which are conjugated by the local connections. Thus, the theory proposes unstably bonds between corporeal and incorporeal elements, which eventually lead towards continuous new emergent field identities, consequently, resulting, as discussed in the previous chapter, in a multiplicity of thresholds, whose mutations are determined by the variables that emerge out of the interaction of the components. Nevertheless, if the interactions of the components are based upon our propensity to chunk them into encoded subjects and objects relations, the emergent Field would receive constant identities or even predefined identities. As a result, at every evaluation, in possibility time, the spaces would become singularities and resume the role of containers. In order to nurture constant emergence we need to, as philosopher Erin Manning proposes, slow down the process of morphability from the relational field into our neurotypical perception of the objects-subjects world segmentation. Her theory progresses around the notion of Autism as a tool of process shaping. In order to exemplify her principle, she quotes Anne Corwin in saying that “chunking” refers to our tendency to preview our world in a Aristotelian way. We pre-segment our interaction based on predefined and pre-coded notions. On the other hand, an autistic perception does not begin with the general attributes and does not fully assume integration above complexity; it takes the entire emergent field’s environment into account and builds relations upon it. For this conception, Erin Manning illustrates the example of the sitting surface, given by Anne Corwin:

“Often I tend to sit on floors and other surfaces even if furniture is available, because it’s a lot easier to identify ‘flat surface a person can sit on’ than it is to sort the environment into chunks like ‘couch,’ ‘chair,’ ‘floor,’ and ‘coffee table.’”

This phenomenon, as philosopher Erin Manning explained, is as an ecological attunement, which exposes human experience to a unique level of interaction with

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46 Ibid., 219-220.
47 Ibid., 219.
the world.\textsuperscript{48} It is an experience, which does not presume a preexisting component identity, but one that is formed from within a unique capacity which theorist Karen Barad titles intra-action.\textsuperscript{49} The difference between the action of interacting and the one of intra-acting is easily deduced from the composing contextual terms. The term of ‘inter’ refers to an environment of preexistence, ‘inter’ being translated as: in the midst of or among. Opposed to a one-way causal action in order to interact, the components need to preexist and exert an effect upon one another. Furthermore, interaction imposes a level of independence between the two components that partake within the action. On the other hand, the term of ‘intra’ imposes an environment from within. There is no a priori existence within intra-action. The materializations as well as the ability to perform of the partaking “individuals” (in this sense, individual is the discrete and distinct image of the component) emerges, changes or transmutes from within the relationship and not externally. Through intra-action, the components are brought together within the confinement of the relationship and at the same time separated into emergent co-constitutive entities.\textsuperscript{50} Consequently, the cause and effect or subject-object dichotomies are invalid and the components become the afflicted and non-afflicted, thus, eliminating singularity and individuality. We all experience intra-action when we find ourselves amidst time and space border breaking phenomena; for example, the refugee movement that is happening nowadays. Some of us do not interact with this phenomenon, nevertheless, we intra-act with it. This modern exodus cannot only be resumed to the obvious interpretation of migration of masses, it is a phenomenon that is regulated through intra-action between nature, culture and technological components; components such as the conflagration in the Middle East, human masses, political issues, news channels, the ideas and fears of the human component, et cetera. Thus, the Field created by the relation within the participating components is not preexisting, all the components are responsible for


\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 77-80.
the matter that emerges amidst the development of the phenomenon. This means that through intra-action we are as much a part of the corporeal as incorporeal emergent affordances. It is interesting to see the fact that we are mostly aware of intra-action, even if we do not label it as such, when we engage in artistic observation. When we read a book, preview a painting, or use spaces that originate from certain periods of our history, on occasion, create relations between that medium and the period of time in which it was produced. So it is that, for instance, if we wonder in the marvels of the Colosseum, we cannot help but imagine it in its full glory. We see the people that once filled its stands, we think about their clothing, their way of life and then we reflect it upon our time and our own existence and it eventually influences further physical and/or intangible relations. Consequently, we are able to create associations that do not conform to time or spatial limitations and linearity. Intra-action, therefore, helps us in highlighting the boundaries that we, the neurotypicals, have created.

When prompted with the idea of emergent relational freedom, be it corporeal or incorporeal, we tend to derive towards an architecture that rises not out of the dimensions of a low level of territorialization and coding, but out of the absence of the two. The elimination of boundaries and borders is a highly important manifestation. Not only it engenders continuous thresholds, but also the process plays a central role in the definition of assemblages. This is why, in their book A Thousand Plateaus, Guattari and Deleuze, explain that the component, which enables and eventually holds an assemblage together, is the most deterritorialized one.51 Nevertheless, they also underline that a low level of deterritorialization should not be confused with indetermination or the property of the component of having no territorialization. As the two authors clarify, the most deterritorialized component can be even mechanized (highly determined) and still engender the

permutation of territorial assemblages onto interassemblages by inflicting processes of perceptibility, specialization, contraction and acceleration. Stan Allen also induces the notion of mechanization through the concept of repetition. A Field is not expressed through regulating grids or conventional relations of symmetry, axiality or hierarchy; nevertheless, it is dependent on repetition, interval and seriality. Therefore, when brought to architecture, the approach of borderless-relational spaces should not stimulate the conception of non-coded/non-territorialized or pure uncontrolled chaotic spatial configurations because it is not about the totality, but about the intra-relations and the intervals within which the relations are evaluated. For this reason, in order to expand on my vision of the manifestation of the threshold, I will invoke the notion of low-dimensional deterministic chaos. This type of chaotic configuration, as DeLanda explains in his interview with Brett Stalbaum, is caused by dynamical systems, which are confined by attractors within a space of possibilities:

"The key is to think of phase space as a space of possibilities for a dynamical system (whether geological, biological or social) and attractors as special places in this space that trap systems and hence reduce the number of possible behaviors. It is this reduction that we as observers see as the emergence of order. If a system wanders all over phase space, it would look to us as random, but if it’s behavior is pinned down to a few states, then it will look ordered. Hence, for an attractor in general to produce visible order it needs to be small relative to the space in which it’s embedded (e.g. a 3D attractor in a 100 dimensional space). Also, attractors trap systems in a completely deterministic way (they are destinies for the system) yet because they always come in bunches, there are always alternative destinies."

Even if DeLanda had no intention of making the parallel with assemblages, we could expand on his notion of low-dimensional deterministic chaos within an architectural assemblage. The attractors that have the ability to determine multiple destinies could be translated in components that have the ability to sustain a multiplicity of relation within a phase space, or in our case, an assemblage phase. Consequently, in order for an assemblage phase to be recognizable (be in a state of order), its components need to be of a lesser state, be it corporeal (in number, dimension, etc.) or incorporeal (the multiplicity of the type of emergent affordances). In other words, assemblages that contain a small number of components should oblige the components to enable a high level of intra-action. For instance, museums; where a small number of corporeal components account for vast levels of intra-action. On the other hand, if a large number of components are present, the level of intra-action should be small relative to the components that compose the assemblage. This is when repetition, intervals and seriality are best implemented.

Summarizing, the interaction between the components within the relational field produces a disembodied effect, which eventually stimulates intra-action as a quasi-cause. Therefore, a component property emerges within the field during the forming of the relations and is not a priori coded within the component. At the same time, by recognizing the effect of intra-action in an assemblage, we accept the deterritorialization of an assemblage and thus, reinforce its presence seeing how an assemblage is held together by its most deterritorialized components. As a result, if applied to architecture, the entire progression of slowing down the process of chunking enables identifying affordances that nurture emergent relations during the evolution of intra-action. This eventually engenders the ontology of low-dimensional deterministic chaotic spaces. Therefore, in theory, if we were to
combine the idea of an assemblage, composed out of a multiplicity of phases, with the field conditions in which the relations are based upon the intra-acting ability of the components and not their object-subject dichotomy, it would then result in an Assemblage Field in which spatial ontology would not be a finite process, but an ongoing one. As a result, with every new interval of evaluation, within the same architectural spaces, the intra-action of the components (corporeal or incorporeal), could be able to stimulate different levels of territorialization and coding and consequently, pushing the Assemblage Field towards a different phase. Hence, spaces would not be accounted for by their ability to shelter relations, but by their ability to engender them.
Chapter Five

THE FIVE POINTS OF SPACES ONTOLOGY

The following chapter is a summarizing vision of the afore-discussed topic of spatial ontology based on Assemblages, Field Conditions and Intra-Action. In order to offer more clarity, the chapter will be devised into 5 didactic points on how we could engender spaces that develop their qualities out of emergent relations and not predefined ones. As I mentioned before, this theoretical paper is meant as a guide and it should not be looked upon as definite, but more as an introduction to a way of thought that could lead to a reimagining of the ontology of spaces.

1. Private and public are terms that rob the ability of spaces to transcend beyond their container function. We need to arrest the two typologies and remove the dichotomy they create. The term arrest is important because we do not erase them and we do not discontinue them; the private and the public need to be displayed as harmful influential labels, which restrict spatial emergentism. Nevertheless, the two cannot be replaced by one all-encompassing typology; this would mean changing one totalitarian mentality for another. We have to understand that spaces should not be pre-labeled; instead, spaces obtain their phasial identity at the moment we interact with them.

2. Space is not the final result of an architectural design, it is not public, private and neither common. Space is one of the components of a regionized locale assemblage, which stimulates it through interaction from within with the other components, to morph into a phasial multiplicity. For instance, to make a crude and
corporeal theoretical parallel, space is the horse within the Deleuzian MAN-HORSE-STIRUP assemblage.

Spaces do not exist a priori to their interaction and consequently, intra-action with the palpable realm. This means that we cannot depend solely on flat representations, in which we act as observers and not partakers. In order to improve on this point, we need to embrace a design method that empowers interaction and not definition. For example: two spaces are not separated because we envisioned a sedentary partition on a 2Dimensional field. The two spaces are separated because at the moment of interaction, particular stimuli that have been triggered, inform the participating components that there is a separation. Thus, a separation does not immediately have to result in a physical component; it can embody any form that could trigger the particular affordances that enable separation.

3. We have to understand that the components, which constitute the spatial assemblages (besides the material ones that provide for stability, strength and rigidity and even these if they receive also the identity of expressive components) have a temporary identity, one that is not necessarily predefined. A staircase is a “staircase” only at the point in possibility time when an actor interacts with it in the way it is prescribed by its encoded subject-object relation. The rest of the possibility time, endless affordances can emerge during different intra-actions. Consequently, a staircase does not necessarily prescribe a transition within a spatial field. For instance, a most famous example would be the “Spanish Steps” in Rome. The staircase designed by architect Francesco De Sanctis, is an important component within the assemblage of Piazza di Spagna. The staircase unshackles itself from the object-subject dichotomy, through the entirety of the architectural
design, the rhythm of the steps, the framing of the surrounding components and the transcendental function which it has. Besides the observable affordance of helping within the process of ascending or descending, people are able to discern the affordance of sitting and by doing so, they break the normopath “literary idea” of a staircase. This is because the staircase is just one of the components of the entire assemblage called the Spanish Steps. Together with the other components it helps stimulating not only corporeal, but also incorporeal affordances such as feelings, thoughts, memories, etc. by stimulating the human component to interact in a non-chunking way. I included this example in order to illustrate that this type of emergentism enabling component should not be restricted to the level of monumentalism or iconic architecture. All corporeal and incorporeal components have the ability of engendering new emergent relations and as a quasi-cause stimulate different assemblage phases. We only need to stimulate or enable them to exercise this ability.

4. By engendering emergent affordances and relation through the interaction of the components and as a quasi-cause intra-action, we are able to expose the architectural assemblage in its entirety. If its identity is governed by the corporeal and incorporeal relations of the components then we could say that an architectural assemblage exactly as a rhizome can grow further even if shattered. It will always be able to mutate out of the old identity into the new multiplicities. Consequently, when we think of an architectural corporeal representation, it would be illogical to stimulate a mutation, which is based on a totally disunited new identity. It is in its relation with the whole that the assemblage can start and mutate. This means that when designing, it is impossible to engender a spatial ontology, which has no connection with relating assemblages, be it corporeal or incorporeal. Architecture
that fails to be a part of the social and built environment assemblages that surround it, will always be amensalistic or even worse, parasitic in nature. It is in the power of a good spatial design to stimulate interaction and intra-action with the past, present and future. Only so, it will be able to accept mutations influenced by the variable nature of the level of territorialization and coding that components have.

5. By allowing the multiplicity of interactions to take place, it could appear to result in an action with a chaotic product. Nevertheless, we have to understand that the chaotic outcome of individual assemblages is a limited and necessary one, in pursuance of resuming the otherwise, even more chaotic universal assemblage to order. This is why we need to understand the spatial assemblages as small chaotic attractors that are able to produce order. The way in which they produce order and the magnitude of effect is engendered by their level of territorialization. The formed matter within an assemblage should be directly proportional with the level of allowed interaction. Consequently, a low level of territorialization should allow a high amount of interaction (and eventually, intra-action) and a high level of territorialization should restrict the assemblage to a small amount of interaction. This could be achieved through both corporeal and incorporeal coding, repetition, intervals and seriality.

PS: Architecture that is stimulated by a non-normopathic perception has always the potential of becoming emergent.
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