

Reflection

Summarization of the P2

My research was triggered by a certain urban condition in the area where was once the border of the city of Den Haag. Through analytical drawings of the composing elements, scripts and recording of soundtracks, I understood the condition as a field of heterogeneity, which is under the influence of all systems and regimes. The very functionality, banality, and honesty allow for the potential of the intricacy of things-in-itself to be revealed and perceived.

The Policy (Position and Strategy)

Problematization is unnecessary because it will deprive us of our objectivity. The approach should be more of an appropriate intervention, which does not jeopardize the normal running of the urban mechanism, while at the same time charge the field with more possibilities and experiences.

Our strategy is to place a fresh, sharp, and plain volume in the existing, complicated, heterogeneous field. This action is an illogical, anti-functional demarcation and differentiation of the territory, which brings a new configuration to the urban condition. The perverse and violating volume seems to be totally insensitive to the environment, while in fact, is extremely sensitive, due to its own purity of form. Though the basic morphology of the space remains consistent, the spatial characteristics at different points have been altered, because different systems or regimes have left traces of all kinds (superposition, traversing, interference, etc.) on it, therefore forming tension and friction in the defined space. The super homogeneity of the volume magnifies the influence of existence of the environment, manifested in the objects, props, behaviors, and even events that claim their being in it. In this way, in the newly placed volume, the powers that were exerted on the original field would become prominent, and become perceptible.

The result of the intervention, therefore, is a field of experiences, senses, and observations. With perception of the space, people perceive orientations, impact of urban artifacts, relative positions, and (maybe) further metaphysical relationships. The intervention provided the city itself with a stage, and the people with a lens. If Tschumi in his Manhattan Transcript infuses meaning into daily space with the occurrences of extreme events, this intervention appoints significance to the urban condition, which were taken for granted, with an underlay of extreme spatiality.

The Design

The policy discussed above leads to a design principle which can be transformed and implemented in anywhere of the city. According to the establishment of concept that an urban 'observatory' shall be constructed, the area 'in front' of the Central Station of The Hague is chosen to be the site of intervention as it is considered to be one of the places where such program is most appropriate. As an architectural project, the design aims at a suitable form of intervention for the chosen site, and is required to respond and adapt to the changes this imposition brings about to the border and field condition. Prospectively, through the reconsolidation of the space and programs, the area will be disencumbered of the chaotic and unpleasant impressions, and become an organized and heuristic public space.

As clarified above, given the placement of the volume as a premise, the architect is thereupon endowed with the responsibility of determining the morphology of the volume. It could actually be of any random structural or tectonic composition, as long as it has a homogeneous quality. So in fact it is a choice to contextualize it, i.e. looking for the proper operation and expression which optimizes the actualization of the intention. In the case of Den Haag Centraal station-front, we first define a volume on the ground level, where most of the activities take place; then with the benefit of the upper structure, the principle is reapplied to create a freer volume on the lower level, to strengthen and exploit the idea, and create a contrasting duality to enhance the richness of the space.

Therefore on the upper level it becomes a misty forest, yet everything is in its place – trams and cars go through following their accurate path; trees are reclaimed and stand still; people hop on and off their bikes regularly to take the train... While on the lower level, though nothing happens there, the sensory perception of the surrounding environment is maximized. In both volumes, people could sense the existence of the intricate frictions in this field - in the first occasion, you are in the scenario; in the other one, you are a spectator outside.

The design provided us with various perspectives: on the same eye level, looking in and out of the volumes; interactively, looking up and down through the transparent interface; there is also a chance to observe from the edges, designed to accommodate human scale.

The conflicts were turned into opportunities of new experiences, like different rides in an amusement park. In addition, the spacious plaza free from strong wind and traffic provide the public with venues for more activities... In one word, space has its own power, and we just need to let it be there.