Assemblage Theory as a Method.
Research Paper Plan

Artemy Condon
5288304

TU Delft, Explore Lab 34

Problem Statement.

We find ourselves to be dwellers of palimpsests, where contexts, temporal tropes, simulacra's and complex entanglements have come together and have filled our existence with substance. In a reality as such our nature calls upon us to find certain truths of our "present-pasts" in order to be able to reassess in means to archive. This archival characteristic is necessary for us to be able to perceive these palimpsests as mutating bodies that incorporate traces of our memories. Due to the fact that these palimpsests are now recognized as collective bodies they can be regarded in three-time frames, the past that capsulates the traces of memories, the present as the affect that they have on the contemporary idea, and the future since these palimpsests are abstracts of fluid concepts, we have the ability to hypothesize and act upon the direction of their progression. The proposed method to deconstruct these layered models is Assemblage theory which allows us to place a masque upon the palimpsest and directly cut out instances of it and place them on the suggested system as an organ of the body would have been presented in an anatomical theater. The outcome as this Assemblage would serve as a mnemic device and would be able to signal the critical coordinates of the palimpsestous matrix.

The concept of palimpsest has obtained a broad spectrum of different understandings and readings, from its original form of being an act of destruction of old for the creation of new as it was used in ancient times, we now can observe that almost any layering model is being labeled, romanticized and often misunderstood as a palimpsest, the reason for this is that we are living in a "re" world and the idea of overlooking, copying and reestablishing has become vastly popular in our approach towards the creation of new. Palimpsest happens to suit this search for its constants of past-present relationship. Because of this I feel the need to specify how I am using this term and why it fits the frame of the problem. The aim of this paper and my project is to decode territorisational and ideological conflicts that have embedded themselves in the fabric of urban life and its inhabitants. For this purpose, I am using the word palimpsest to demonstrate the privatization of phycological thought and reflection that has led to this critical moment where we are not fully able to recognize and identify the reason for the appearance of temporal mental and physical "voids", or to put it more correctly as special "non-places" as Deleuze would have called them. To summarize, the palimpsest in this work is used exclusively to symbolize the historical pattern of overlapping ideological bipolarities that have led to deterioration in the urban scene, I am not using this term to paint the picture of physical matters battling amongst themselves in order to thrive, nor is it a collage of sorts, it should be understood as a conceptual metaphor that will help us achieve a sense of metaposition for start.

Research Question. Relevance.

In this paper and in my project, I will be attempting to use Assemblage theory as a method to deconstruct a palimpsestous scenario that has formed in Moscow, Russia during the past century, the narrative pertains the subject of Soviet repressions that have occurred in the capital (besides the whole of the Soviet Union itself) mostly during the period of 1920's-1950's and is known as Stalin's Terror Regime. I will be demonstrating the effect that this incident had and still has on the city and the people, what traces are to be found and propose a series of unique reflections that might be able to shed a light on this topic and hopefully aid the individual in reassessing this traumatizing event.

The relevance of this subject can be seen to this day due to the fact that the Russian government systematically continues to confront the ideological values of the past by discrediting and supporting certain motions of the past. Furthermore, the relevance of this matter becomes increasingly more significant due to the fact that most of the resources that I am using in this research are private organizations that are more often than not funded by liberal media, public donations and private investors. These resources spatialize in gathering, archiving and educating the mass on negative parts of Russia's history which does not align with the existing policy of the government, because of this during the past several years we have seen a wave of "liquidation" (as the term is used by the government in their professional lingo) of these organizations. Indeed, I do not attempt to solve all problems of the evolved situation with speculations and a "paper" project, but I hope to be able to outline the parameters of an epistemological coping mechanism with which the consciousness might become the essence of reality. The conflict of this schizophrenic idiosyncratic belief might not be resolved completely, but perhaps the outline of the resolution might become more evident by the end of this research.

Theoretical Framework.

Due to the fact that an Assemblage does not have a hierarchical structure, the closest semiotic resemblance that can be conceived of its model would be a multilane highway with a roundabout. Here we find bodies streaming past each other with a variety of speeds and objectives and that have an opportunity to change their trajectory by reversing and heading in opposite directions. This may appear to be an unstable prism at first hand since we must constantly keep in mind a multiplicity of values simultaneously but is promptly adjusted by introducing a set of lenses and filters that systemize the quantity and quality of information that is to be found. The core action of an Assemblage as an instrument is a repetitive parcellation process in which we use binary differentiations to override the absence of a hierarchy and translate relativism to an intrinsic coordinate system. Indeed, the proposed Assemblage system remains to consist of layers, yet here we establish that the layers do not have primary, secondary and so on values, they are equal among themselves which allows us to freely move between them, the differences that separate the layers and the space amid them are the four principles described by Manuel DeLanda and the qualities entitled to them. The binaries to name a few are micro-macrocosms, temporality and spatiality, transcendental and empirical, heterogenous and homogenous, interiorities and exteriorities, voids and traces.

In this work I am using assemblage theory in order to satisfy our mnemic tendencies and converting instincts to institutions which will allow me to create a positive platform for the found critical instance. The "boiling down" process that I have described before in result leaves us with a

simulacrum of an assemblage, a copy of an image of an Idea that initially instigates the chain of events, the hyper referential simulacrum is able to seclude the core parameters of the structure and at the same time deny and/or approve its original state. Here it is important to establish that I have introduced the simulacra to this system for a particular reason, even though an Assemblage is a multiplicity of elements that are able to shift and transform, in essence all the layers, bodies and metaphors share the same core, they are connected by an urge of perception amongst themselves, as an eye is the same as the sun for, they observe.

Method.

Allow me to demonstrate the four principles of an Assemblage as described in "Assemblage Theory" by using them to recognize, disassemble and reassess what the properties of a table are:

1. An assemblage is an individual entity, meaning that "Because the ontological status of all assemblages is the same, entities operating at different scales can directly interact with one another, individual to individual, a possibility that does not exist in a hierarchical ontology, like that composed of genera, species, and individuals." [1] If we were to imagine a table that consists of different components, materials and details, despite the fact that the materials, scales and precise purpose of each element deviates from the other, the table top may be wooden and serve as a placeholder whilst the metal screws serve as to connection and attach the components between themselves, individually these components play separate roles and have unique characteristics but are the same in the assemblage since only by collectivity and by sharing the same goal, they create a table. We cannot say that a particular body in this model stands to be more important than any other which eliminates the preposition that a hierarchy can exist, and we can see that despite their eccentricity they share the same essence.

2. An Assemblage is part of Assemblages. "At any one of the nested levels, assemblages exist as part of populations: populations of persons, pluralities of communities, multiplicities of organisations, collectivities of urban centers, and it is from interactions within these populations that larger assemblages emerge as a statistical result, or as a collective unintended consequence of intentional action." [2] By taking a step back and looking at a table, we can recognize that a table is part of a bigger family, it is a part of furniture as whole, a part of an interior, a part of human dwellings since we regularly use it as a part of our routine. The same operation appears if we increase the parcellation and zoom in to closer scale and look at a leg of a table, it's particular action to shift the wight of the body to critical points is geometrically and ontologically shared by the nature of our surroundings and within the matrix of a leg we can find a new assemblage by describing its own parameters, multiplicities and so on, comparing it to an ancient spolia of a column or a butaforie of a column on stage.

3. An Assemblage is composed of heterogenous components. Every assemblage consists of individual heterogenous structures within which by the means of parcellation homogenous bodies are found. This cycle repeats itself on each scale, the homogeneity transforms into heteronomies

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[1,2] DeLnada, Manuel. Assemblage Theory. Edinburgh University Press. 2016

when it itself is looked through the newly calibrated lens. This is one of assemblage's strongest abilities to distinguish between these two realms and is one of the main reasons for which I have chosen this method to approach palimpsests. By this constant mapping and coding process desert islands, archipelagos and artefacts become clear and approachable. This becomes more evident as soon as we begin thinking within architectural terms where the sheer number of variations and tropes begin to seamlessly overwhelm the perception of the creator and viewer. As described in the first principle the table consists for heterogenous components, but they all share homogeneity in order to transfer into a table.

4. An Assemblage has a multidirectional parcellation. The upward causality is necessary to make emergent properties immanent: an assemblage's properties may be irreducible to its parts but that does not make them transcendent, since they would cease to exist if the parts stopped interacting with one another. The downward causality is needed to account for the fact that most assemblages are composed of parts that come into existence after the whole has emerged.

Connection to Design Project.

One of my main resources and motivators for this work is a program called "Last Address" which works on finding and memorializing repressed people and hanging small metal plaques on the buildings where these people have lived with their name, date of birth, arrest, death and rehabilitation. The plaques that were designed by the Russian architects Eugene Ass and Alexander Brodsky have an empty hole on the place where the portrait of the victim usually would have been displayed, this is so to argue with the traditional perception of memorial plaques and emphasizes on the fact that the absence of the portrait serves a stronger effect, the void tells a bigger story here than a classical example would. This is a thought that I hope to carry throughout my project.

As I have mentioned before I am using the described four principles of Assemblage in order to reassess the established situation in Moscow regarding how the repressions in the past have had their toll on the nature of the city, its buildings and its residence. My intention is to gather, document, analyze and reflect upon the buildings that have been affected by this period of the Soviet time and try to express via architecture the feeling of a space becoming a void by external forced pressure. Voids not in the literal sense since these are not Gordon Matta-Clark incisions, nor have the buildings become abandoned, but voids that have obtained negative connotations with the public, which is parameterized by the fact that most of these buildings have obtained an epos of their own, vernacular legends.

To do so I have begun outlining the frame of the matrix with which I am working, I have limited the scale of the physical aspects of this subject to ten districts within Moscow that stretch from the center of the city to its "third ring" - the town's main circular highway which separates the metropolis from the suburban life. This step is the initial elimination and classification process that aims to help me reduce the heterogeneity and multiplicity of the research to homogenous pillars on which I can zoom in and concentrate on with a greater detail. Nether the less, I feel obliged to mention that the repression of people and the spaces that they have inhibited expanses across the whole territory of the Soviet Union, including for example the parts of Germany that belonged to the Soviet Union during that period. I plan to continue my research by gradually increasing the parcellation and my next step now is to begin on researching specific buildings and propose a series of interventions that collectively play as an institute.

Allow me to demonstrate an example of what the next steps could appear like on one of the most evident buildings for this scenery that exists next to the Kremlin and is known as the House on the Embankment, or the House of the Government that has suffered most of all from Stalin's repressions due to the fact that most of the Soviet elite were placed in this building. The total amount of people that were repressed in this building sums up approximately to seven hundred and with this amount of casualty's multiple legends have gone amongst the public and the house is even recognized by some as haunted. But the main essence of the atmosphere within this building is that the dwellers constantly lived in fear and felt spied upon, so the idea of a private space marginally transcended into a medium of a theatrical stage where the actors are being intently watched. For this reason I propose as an intervention for this case a theatrical space that will be able to bring the viewers together by a collective experience.

Expected Outcome.

By describing this I attempt to outline the preliminary properties of the vectors of the Assemblage matrix and I have showcased the modifiable multiplicity of a single object and can now state what aspects create this object.

My assumption is that if we are to translate the simulacra into an institute, then there I have the opportunity to start to code the archiving, reassessing and reflecting positions to a subject that later on is able to be manipulated to reach my goal, which in result manifests itself in a heterotopic space. A space of play and freedom, a platform that can provide if not the experience itself, then at least the shared mimic of a collective experience. A heterotopic space is able in capsulate the "non-place" significance that is needed as a produce for this space is optimal for representing traces, tectonics and meanings that we inhabit it with.

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