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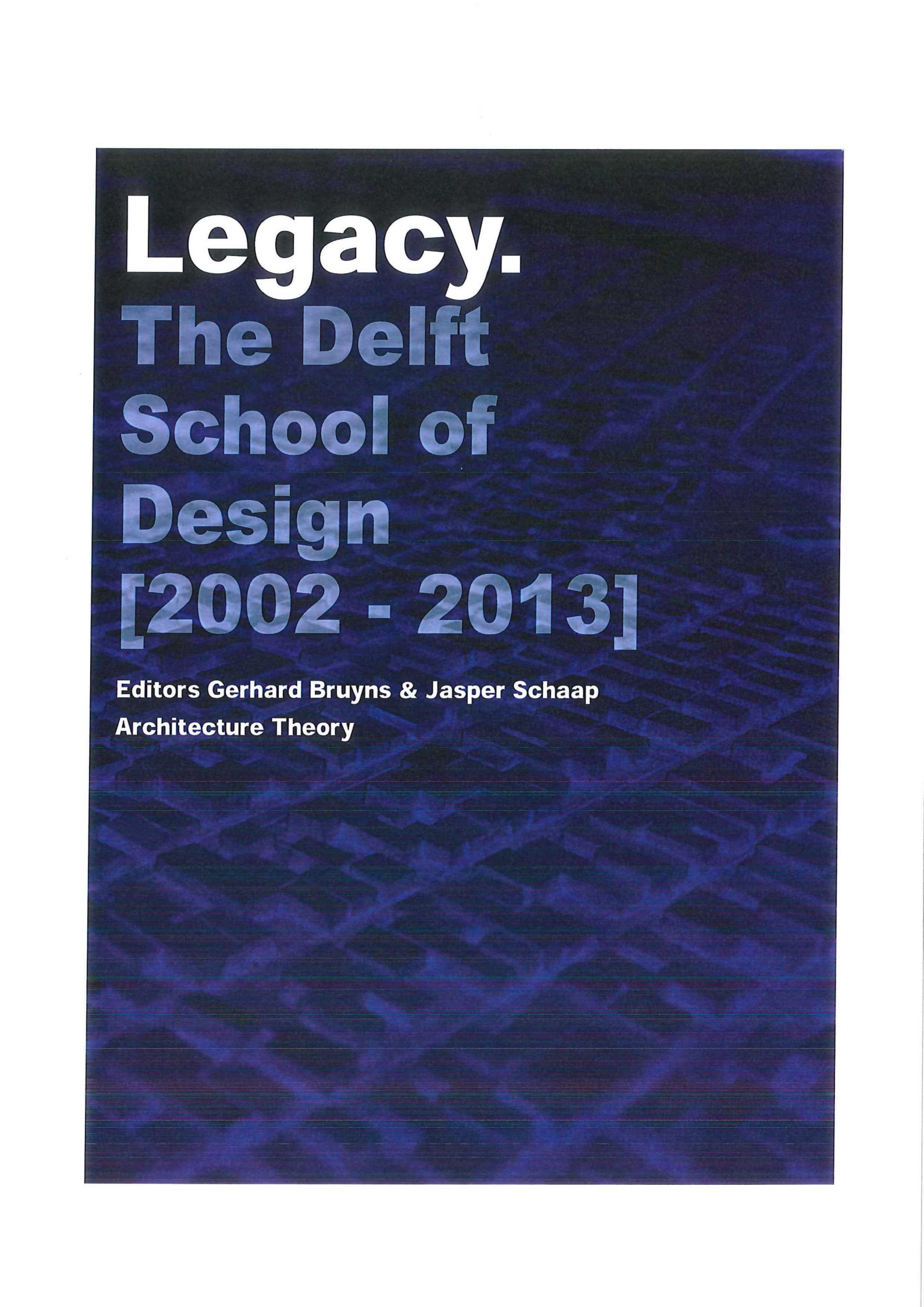
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# The Delft School of Design [2002 - 2013]

**Editors Gerhard Bruyns & Jasper Schaap**

**Architecture Theory**

# The Asignifying Affordance of Assemblage: A Heuristic of the Energetics of the Exteriority of Relations

**Marc Boumeester and Andrej Radman**

*AAA* is an urban architecture cartography based on the Movement-Image and its exhaustion through enabling constraints/obstructions. The project was developed by Andrej Radman and Marc Boumeester, researchers at the Delft School of Design, Faculty of Architecture at the Delft University of Technology. It is an education program consisting of research driven design practice that set up collaborative networks. The photos are a record of the two seminars held at the Faculties of Architecture at Cambridge University and University of Liverpool in Spring 2012.

## Three Ecologies, Two Territories, One Reterritorialisation

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3 *ECOLOGIES* (Deterritorialisation) | ≠ System/Structure | /≠ per negativum/ |
| | = Environment + Socius + Psyche | /Symbol; De-Sign/ |
| 2 *TERRITORIES* | = Liverpool + Cambridge | /Index; Te-Sign/ |
| 1 *RETERRITORIALISATION* | = Delft | /Icon; Re-Sign/ |

## De-Te-Re Glossary

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *ASIGNIFYING* | ≠ Signifying/General | |
| | = Significant/Singular | /Extraordinary/ |
| *AFFORDANCE* | ≠ Function | |
| | = Relation | /Pragmatic/ |
| *ASSEMBLAGE* | ≠ Object | |
| | = Objectile | /Event/ |
| *HEURISTIC* | ≠ Method | |
| | = Trial & Error | /Aesthetic/ |
| *ENERGETICS* | ≠ Extensive | |
| | = Intensive | /Non-Dialectical Difference/ |
| *EXTERIORITY of Relations* | ≠ Anthropocentric | |
| | = Ecological | /Life-Form + Environment/ |

**Deterritorialisation (Three Ecologies)** The ENVIRONMENT, the SOCIUS and the PSYCHE ought to be placed on the same ontological footing. In mapping out reference points for the three ecologies, the *AAA* abandons pseudo-scientific paradigms. The reason behind this is not simply the complexity of the entities under consideration. More fundamentally, the three ecologies are governed by a *different logic* from that of ordinary communication between speakers and listeners (ego-logic). In the words of Guattari:

> *Whilst the logic of discursive sets seeks to delimit its objects, the logic of intensities - or eco-logic - concerns itself solely with the movement and intensity of evolutive processes. Process, which I here counterpose to system and structure, seeks to grasp existence in the very act of its constitution, definition, and deterritorialization [...]1*

In other words, the time has come to unyoke the architect from Newtonian physics and Cartesian metaphysics in favour of the ECOLOGICAL approach (Thesis of Nonlinearity/Emergence). Most importantly, therein lies a possibility of pursuing a genuine politics of DEFATALISATION. Resetting ourselves in a metaphysical perspective, as Meillassoux suggests, permits us to reconstruct our existence beyond FAITH alone or the sole opportunism of INTEREST.[2]

**Territorialisation** The world self-generates from potential. The primitives of the system are lived abstractions that have a nature of the qualitative CONTINUUM, and not BITS of information. The logic of coexistence (relation) is different from the logic of separation (discreteness). What is truly remarkable in the eco-logic is that the order of MOVEMENT and SPACE is reversed, as explained by Massumi:

> *Movement no longer connects the preexisting positions on a set of a coordinate grid; it is no longer subordinated to position. Positions are derivative of movement and the grid is derivative of the emergence of position. So it is the movement of mapping that makes its own territory and territory is made entirely out of sensation; out of experience, out of qualities and differential experience: literal world of sensation.[3]*

To put it simply, under the *AAA* approach it is the logic of sensation that leads to the logic of relation. Consequently, an assemblage can be characterised by ongoing processes of DETERRITORIALISATION and TERRITORIALISATION that either destabilise/dissolve or stabilise/consolidate its identity. In the words of DeLanda:

> *[T]erritorialisation must first of all be understood literally [as] processes that define or sharpen the spatial boundaries of actual territories. Territorialisation, on the other hand, also refers to non-spatial processes which increase the internal homogeneity of an assemblage, such as the sorting processes which exclude a certain category [...].[4]*

**Reterritorialisation** Architectural design is action at a distance in a profound sense.[5] If ASSEMBLAGE has been the core concept of Deleuze and Guattari ever since *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) then what they call a TERRITORY is simply its limit condition (striation).[6] Any subsequent de-territorialisations and re-territorialisations are to be considered as mere dimensions of the very assemblage which is beyond the absolute control of the designer. Given the asymmetry between the territory and the assemblage, it should not come as a surprise that: "What holds an assemblage together [what gives it integrity] is not the play of framing forms or linear causalities but, actually or potentially, its most deterritorialised component."[7]

We have learned the (PoMo) lesson, and painfully so, that it is not true that anything goes. We have yet to learn that there is a difference in kind, and not merely in degree, between the ACTUAL and VIRTUAL. In the words of Deleuze, "Forms interact not with forms but with their background which is the system of all forms even before they had separate existence."[8] The idea which has persisted for the last four hundred years of a variably deformable OBJECT in a complex vector FIELD as being the main principle of design needs to be challenged. By contrast, only force can be related to another force.[9] To put it bluntly, action on **action, not action on object**, is the formula upheld by the *AAA*.

1 Félix Guattari, The Three Ecologies, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (London: Continuum, [1989] 2008). See also: Gregory Bateson, Steps to an Ecology Of Mind; Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology (New York: Ballantine, 1972).
2 Interview with Meillassoux, http://steve-harris.blogspot.com/2010/02/interview-with-meillassoux.html (accessed April 10, 2012). See also: Félix Guattari, "Everybody Wants To Be A Fascist" in Chaosophy, ed. Sylvere Lothringer (Los Angeles: Autonomedia/Semiotext(e), 1995).
3 Brian Massumi, "The Virtual" Experimental Digital Arts lecture (EDA, 2000), http://design.ucla.edu/eda/archive/serve.php?stream=/mnt/video/design/video/041700_massumi.rm (accessed June 25, 2008).
4 Manuel DeLanda, A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 13.
5 Robin Evans, The Projective Cast: Architecture and Its Three Geometries (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1995), p. 363.
6 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus (London, New York: Continuum [1980] 2004), p. 337.
7 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus (London, New York: Continuum [1980] 2004), p. 374. See also: James Williams, "Deleuze's Ontology of Creativity: becoming in Architecture" in Pli (no. 9, 2000), pp. 211-212.
8 Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition (New York: Columbia UP,[1968] 1994), p. 87.
9 Gilles Deleuze, Nietzsche and Philosophy (New York: Columbia University Press, [1962] 2006), p. 6.

# Credits

**The Delft School of Design (DSD)** was formally instituted in 2002 as a laboratory for emerging research and experimentation concerning doctoral research within the faculty's departments of architecture and urbanism and building technology.

Since 2013 the DSD has been continued in the chair of Architecture Theory at the Faculty of Architecture, Delft University of Technology.

Since its founding, the DSD has provided both an academic and public platform for events such as lectures and debates, conferences, colloquia, seminars and workshops. The DSD platform brought together architects, historians, theoreticians, urbanists, and structural designers; additionally, we also brought together economists, geographers, social and political scientists, neuroscientists and philosophers, comparative literature scholars, filmmakers and artists. Whilst each has detailed and extensive specialized knowledge in their chosen field, the goal is to organize seminars, meetings and debates around various mutually relevant themes.

These encounters, while respecting the diverse disciplines coming to the table, are productive and generative of fresh approaches to the complex sets of problems engaging professionals, academics, and emerging doctoral researchers and scholars today. The DSD thus provides for the exploration of interconnected frameworks of knowledge, detailed problem analysis, and technical methodologies.

This book provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the DSD and the student work which has been produced by students of the DSD in the period between 2009 and 2013.