

This research project discusses how literature offers valuable ways to become aware of how people experience, use, and imagine places. It argues that Lefebvre's concept of lived space, experienced and lived through by characters, evoking memories and imaginations, is the space that we encounter in the evocative descriptions of places and spaces by literary writers. The hypothesis of this work is that if existing literature can provide such insights, a literary approach using instruments from literature is also conceivable within the domain of architectural research and even of architectural design.

To address the different perspectives that a literary approach to architecture can provide, the work proposes a triad of interrelated concepts: description, transcription and prescription. Each of the three branches of this literary "bridge" connects to a slightly different discourse and examples of architectural and literary practices. Together, the terms description, transcription and prescription supply a framework to address lived experience and develop tools for spatial research and design.

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Urban Literacy

A Scriptive Approach to
the Experience, Use, and
Imagination of Place

Klaske Havik

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A Scriptive Approach to the Experience, Use, and Imagination of Place

Proefschrift

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Prologue

LJUBLJANA, 2006.



12

Panoramic view of the triple bridge Tromostovje in Ljubljana.

Leaving the apartment in the morning, I inhaled the clear cold of autumn air, smelled the chestnuts baking on the corner of the small square next to the three bridges. The castle on the other side still partly hidden in fog, weak sunlight starting to cast its spell on the trees lining up the river bank as I walked by, and I continued my way to the university library, designed by Jože Plečnik. My fingers softly scraped the plinth of its façade: rough stone, simultaneously hard and soft. "It has a life of its own," I thought, and imagined where it came from, a mountain, how it had been carved out, how the architect had drawn its size and position in the wall, how a craftsman's hand must have placed it in the plasticity of this façade, how it had passed the years of students passing, of sun and rain and frost. I turned the corner and shook the cold handle, the shape of a horse head, of the heavy main entrance door to this library. Inside, its monumental staircase reminded me of the impressive staircase in Rossi's Bonnefanten museum in Maastricht, while realizing that the influence must be understood the other way around - they were some fifty years apart. In one of the streets leading from the library back to the river, I entered an antiquarian bookstore and found Jung's Synchronicity on its shelves.¹ The temperature had risen and I treated myself to a coffee at a terrace on the riverside, near the triple bridge. Like the library, this bridge, consisting of three bridges (Tro-mostovje) was designed by Jože Plečnik, as a part of a larger reconstruction of the quays along the river Ljubljanica. Surprisingly, the three directions of the bridge do not correspond to monumental axes, as one would expect, and Plečnik might very well have managed to span the short distance with one single bridge. The triple bridges, however, offer three slightly different perspectives of the central square. While I was reading Jung's theory about the coincidental connection between events, things started falling into place. I watched the three bridges, realizing how they connected this city to itself, its natural curve following the river, its hill with the Castle, I watched the railings, the stairs leading to the lower embankment, I watched the people, pedestrians making their way along the river, visiting the market place, crossing the bridge by one of the three branches, to the other side, to other urban places, to other activities. I imagined their trajectories and imagined how the triple bridge influenced their perspectives. It was here that all trajectories of the city intersected. And it was here that all themes and ambiguities of architecture became visible: the objects and subjects of the city, the individual and the collective, the designer and the users, the reality and the imagination, the detail and the larger, urban whole. This was my bridge, my metaphorical model, the key to the apparatus of my work. Here, I could explore different directions, while holding them together as a unity. I began to explore the bridge, as a place to read, to talk, and to write.

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¹ First note: Carl Jung, *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, Princeton University Press, New York 1973 [1952]

1 Departure

1.1 Destination

1.1.1 AMBIGUITY OF ARCHITECTURE

This work proposes a literary view on the experience, use and imagination of place. My quest for the formulation of another approach to architecture and the city derived from a critique on the relative absence of these themes in architectural discourse, education and practice, which tend to foreground formalistic and visual aspects of architecture. Looking for a way to find a richer perspective from which to address the complexity of lived experience, I arrived at literature. Through literature, this work proposes another way of *thinking* about architecture and the city, and it offers tools to *practice* and *educate* their analysis and design.

Let me clarify why I have started this literary journey, by quoting two architectural voices that have brought to the fore the ambiguity of the architectural profession as its fundamental challenge – since precisely this challenge has been my place of departure. Architect Bernard Tschumi spoke of the “paradox” of architecture when addressing the difference between the conceptual thought of architects and the physical, social and experiential aspects of its built reality. Tschumi describes this ambiguous field of tension as “the paradoxical relationship between architecture as a product of the mind, as a conceptual and dematerialized discipline, and architecture as the sensual experience of space and as a spatial practice . . . the impossibility of simultaneously questioning the nature of space, and, at the same time, making or experiencing a real space”.² Indeed, while architects are educated to think rationally about their object of design and discourse, in reality the way architecture is perceived and lived in takes on other dimensions than the purely theoretical, technical and the measurable. Precisely this paradox makes the architectural profession both complex and challenging. Spatial design, indeed an action of the mind, is concerned with the making of a physical space that is used, lived and experienced by people. If this is the case, an important question for architects and other spatial designers is how people relate to places. How, for instance, is it possible that some places become anchored in the memories of people, while others remain largely overseen? What is the influence of architecture on the perception of our living environment, on the activities that take place, on our social encounters, on our thoughts, stories and dreams regarding places?

The ambiguity of architecture is at stake on numerous levels. The architect and

² Bernard Tschumi, “Architecture and Transgression”, in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass / London 1996, pp. 66-67

theorist Juhani Pallasmaa has described architecture as an “impure” discipline, not only in that it is in many ways related to other fields and disciplines, but also because numerous seemingly opposite notions are at stake within architecture itself: “Architecture is simultaneously a practical and a metaphysical act: a utilitarian and poetic, technological and artistic, economic and existential, collective and individual, manifestation of our being.”³ This “impurity”, as Pallasmaa calls it, is by no means to be understood as a weakness of architecture. On the contrary, I would argue that precisely the nature of architecture to always address two sides of the matter should be considered its richness. However, the question remains how architects can be educated to use this ambiguity in a productive way. How can they find a balance between seemingly contradictory notions? How can architecture serve functional needs and simultaneously stir the senses and emotions? How can a building be both stable, durable, functional, affordable and artistically expressive and meaningful? How can a place have a different meaning for each individual, and at the same time provide a public realm and be part of a collective identity? These fundamental ambiguities of architecture have formed the place of departure of this project. While acknowledging that the paradox between architecture as both a product of the mind and a bodily perceived, experiential reality will never be solved, this project intends to draw threads between both of its sides, and show how the above described ambiguity can prove inspiring, enriching and productive for architects. While acknowledging that the paradox will remain the very field of tension upon which architecture operates, I argue that it is through architecture (in the moment of the design decision as well as in the moment of the actual spatial experience) that the paradox can momentarily dissolve, and that such seemingly opposite notions can coincide. Indeed, rather than seeing architecture’s ambiguity as a problem, I have regarded it as a fertile field of tension upon which I could trace out my paths. Paths, indeed, that could creatively address the paradox of architecture, that could deal with such seemingly opposite notions as subject-object, author-reader and reality-imagination, and that could connect architectural research and practice to the lived experience of places. As will become clear in this work, these paths have emerged from literature.

As a writer and reader of both architectural and literary texts, I have come to realize that in literature, the experiences of space and spatial practice are often much more accurately described than in professional writings on architecture and cities, whether in the form of architectural history, criticism or design theory. Literary writers instead prove to be able to *read* places and spaces, cities and landscapes at different levels. Indeed, the relationship between humans and their environment is often described with great accuracy and detail in novels and stories. Space in literature, as seen from the point of view of literary characters with their own memories and emotions, is almost by definition *lived* space. Literary writing confronts us

3 Juhani Pallasmaa, “Landscapes of Architecture- Architecture and the Influence of Other Fields of Inquiry”, 2003, published in: Peter Mackeith (editor), *Encounters. Architectural essays* by Juhani Pallasmaa, Rakennustieto Oy, Helsinki 2005, pp. 335-336

with a certain ambivalence concerning subjectivity and objectivity, individuality and collectivity, and fiction and reality. I propose that this ambiguity of literature, which might at first sight complicate a productive relationship between literature and architecture, is precisely its strength. The gaze of the literary writer enables us to momentarily resolve these seemingly binary oppositions, and to illustrate that in fact, the lived experience of architecture is a matter of both. If existing literature can provide such insights, a literary approach using instruments from literature is conceivable within the domain of architectural research and even of architectural design.

1.1.2 THE BRIDGE OF URBAN LITERACY

The destination of this academic journey is thus to build a bridge that can help to creatively address the ambiguities of architecture, and to connect architectural research and practice to the lived experience of places. Taking into account the perspectives that literature has to offer, the hypothesis of this work is that this bridge can be a literary one. The choice for a literary approach to discuss spatial matters might at first seem a detour, but I hope to show in this work that this detour can be a *way around* the way architecture is commonly thought about and practiced. I would like to highlight three important perspectives. First, evocative literary descriptions of spaces, whether in novels or poetry, often reveal an inclusive understanding of architectural experience. While in architecture the visual and the formal tend to be dominant, literature allows us to describe other sensory perceptions of spaces with great detail and intensity. Also other aspects of “lived” experience, such as atmosphere, mood or memory, which remain largely untouched in architectural discourse, come to the fore in literary descriptions. Literature thus allows us to address the *experience* of places in richer ways than architects usually tend to do. Second, literature allows us to address the *use* of architecture. Especially when describing urban places, literary narratives often reveals the social aspects of architecture – it is through the literary accounts of such places that we can learn about the “socius” of architecture.⁴ In literature, the user appears twice, not only as a character whose activities unfold in time and space, but also as the reader who, in a sense, co-produces the story by his or her own imagination. The active relationship between writer and reader, as well as between the activities of characters and the spatial setting of the novel, deserves closer study by architects, as all too often the attention paid to the user is limited to fulfilling programmatic requirements, without taking into account the life of a building after its inauguration: a life marked by changing uses and users. Third, novels can be seen as sketches

4 Dutch professor Arie Graafland uses this term in his discussion of the relationship between architecture and society. Arie Graafland, *The Socius of Architecture. Amsterdam, Tokyo, New York, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam 2000.*

of another world, balancing between reality and imagination. Sometimes, these worlds can be read as critiques on the existing, while some literary writers, such as the surrealists, have gone far to explore the potential of the imagination. If novels present constructions of another world, architectural designs are much alike: they prescribe, as it were, a not yet existing situation. By studying the tools that writers employ in constructing their spatial imaginations, we can learn new ways to *imagine* architecture.

The literary bridge that this work intends to construct might shed a new light on the 'unitary code' by which the French theorist Henri Lefebvre hoped to connect the *conceived* nature of theoretical discourse about space and the *lived* space of inhabitants and users. Lefebvre sought "a language common to practice and theory, as also to inhabitants, architects and scientists", that would "bring together levels and terms which are isolated by existing spatial practice and by ideologies underpinning it: the (micro)architectural level and the (macro)level [of] urbanists, politicians and planners; the everyday realm and the urban realm".⁵ Indeed, an approach to bridge the different ways that space is thought about, experienced, used and imagined. Lefebvre also hints at different scales at stake: he suggests that urbanists, politicians and planners tend to think and operate on a larger, urban, scale than the architectural scale of everyday life. If such a code can be compared to a language, Lefebvre suggests that it should bring "... an alphabet, a lexicon and a grammar together in within an overall framework".⁶ Some 25 years after Lefebvre's quest, Charles Landry, one of the key theorists in urban innovation, suggested that there might be such a language, or rather, *literacy*, to bring different disciplines together, indeed by using a writer's gaze to look at urban and spatial questions. In *The Creative City*, Landry defines urbanism as the discipline constituting a dialectics with other related disciplines, and introduces the concept "urban literacy" within a series of seven concepts that can be seen as possible tools for urban innovation: "Urban literacy is the ability and skill to 'read' the city and understand how cities work, and is developed by learning about urbanism ... Urbanism can become the 'meta urban discipline' and urban literacy a linked generic and overarching skill. A full understanding of urbanism only occurs by looking at the city from different perspectives."⁷

I came across Landry's notion of urban literacy early in this work, and immediately realized that it offers an interesting and potentially productive view on contemporary urban innovation. The word literacy suggests the functionality of the approach: if literacy is a complex set of abilities needed to read, write and understand a language, then *urban* literacy is the ability to read, write and understand the city. The

5 Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space*, Blackwell Publishing, London, 1991 [*La Production d'espace*, Editions Anthropos, Paris 1974], pp 64-65

6 Ibidem

7 Charles Landry, *The Creative City- a toolkit for urban innovators*, Comedia / Earthscan, London 2000, pp. 246-247

idea of such a literacy, focused on urban place, providing a set of tools to describe, read and write the city, seemed appropriate for my quest, as it touches upon precisely the connection between spatial disciplines and literature. The strength of "urban literacy", as I provisionally label it after Landry, lies in the idea that multiple disciplines – and therefore perspectives – are used simultaneously, and multiple time periods are viewed side by side. The approach can be called literary insofar as it adopts the gaze of literary characters in order to reveal, highlight and question the lived experience of urban space. In Landry's book, urban literacy is presented as a broad notion encompassing many different terms:

"Urban literacy is concerned with interpreting and decoding all our experiences and senses ... It seeks to understand the shapes of urban landscapes and why they came about. It tries to sense history. It attempts to feel the city's economy ... it helps identify social consequences of urban economies in transition ... it helps appreciate aesthetic codes ... it intuits and interprets the manifold urban distinctions and identifiers ..."⁸

Landry's description, while thought provoking, still remains unclear as to how the various disciplines can work together and how urban planners and architects can employ this new urban language. Seeking ways to "read" the city, Landry discusses reframing devices such as "seeing through the eyes of ..." and "survey of the senses"⁹. The first device encourages the designer to conduct a site analysis from the perspective of a different (fictional) character, whereas the second focuses on 'looking' with different senses than only the visual – which is obviously the dominant sense in architecture and urban planning. Both techniques are essentially literary; the use of a character's perspective and details of sensory perception to describe a specific setting are commonly used by literary writers. By introducing such devices, Landry gives some hints as to how urban literacy could work. However, he has not made urban literacy instrumental for the design disciplines. While Landry introduces the concept as a key issue, which "can lead to a new language in urban planning"¹⁰, it offers only a challenging starting point. A more precise articulation of the concept should reveal how social and spatial disciplines can be brought together. Further, the instruments of 'urban literacy' should be more clearly defined. The use of literary instruments to understand and engage spatial qualities in architecture and urban design provides a means for various disciplines to work together. In order to make this literary approach applicable to architectural research and design, it is necessary to make urban literacy more specific, and explore its possibilities more thoroughly.

The theoretical construction that I propose to connect the idea of urban literacy to architectural research and practice can be visualized as a threefold literary bridge

8 Charles Landry, *The Creative City- a toolkit for urban innovators*, Comedia / Earthscan, London 2000, p 249

9 Ibidem, p. 180

10 Ibidem, p 250

addressing important aspects of urban literacy by means of three interrelated “scriptive” concepts: description, transcription and prescription – three different concepts that offer the possibility to introduce the gaze of the literary writer in the domain of architecture and urbanism. I call them scriptive, since writing, *scribere* is the most essential activity of the writer. While the three concepts are also “literary”, I chose the term scriptive since this addresses the *active use* of a literary gaze. The term scriptive can also be related to architecture: architecture “scripts” spaces and spatial sequences, as it were. Each of the three branches of this bridge provides a different perspective, by connecting to different theoretical discourses and examples of architectural and literary practices. The terms description, transcription and prescription supply a framework to structure knowledge and develop literary tools for research, education and design concerning architecture and the city. In the chapter Description, I propose that the descriptive capacity of the literary writer is a skill that can help architects to develop a sensitivity to perceptual and poetic aspects of places. Here, the ambiguous relation between subject and object is at stake. The chapter Transcription focuses on the crossing of disciplinary borders, and on the investigation of the interactive relationship between author and reader, and consequently, between architect and user. Then, the chapter Prescription deals with the field of tension between reality and imagination, as indeed architects and planners are involved with the making of a not yet existing situation. Literary approaches that deal with indeterminacy and creatively use the relationship between reality and imagination offer tools to deal with this relation in design. Within each of the branches, the same path of research has been followed in order to construct the spatiality of the bridge of urban literacy. In the main branches, each concept is first defined in terms of etymology and connotation. Fragments from novels and poems serve as illustrations of these definitions. Second, a critical reading of relevant theoretical sources provides a basis on which to connect each concept to a specific architectural discourse. Third, an analytical model is presented in the form of an analysis of the work of an architect, which is argued to be exemplary for the approach. A number of exercises in architectural education show at the end of each chapter how the approach can be taught and further developed.

| | description | transcription | prescription |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|
| field | lived experience | use, activity | time, indeterminacy |
| intersecting concepts | subject-object | author-reader | reality-imagination |
| spatial theory | phenomenology, place attachment | social space theory, spatial practices | real-and-imagined space, chance, scenario planning |
| literary instruments | evocative description, observation, poetic receptivity | narrative, character, experiment | scenario, montage /assemblage, chronotope |
| theoretical references | Merleau-Ponty, Tuan, Casey | Lefebvre, de Certeau, Ricoeur | Soja, Bakhtin, Keunen |
| literary references | Proust, Calvino, Mulisch, Høeg, Haasse, Pessoa, Kopland | Benjamin, Couperus, Oulipo, Danielewski, James Joyce | Orwell, Houellebecq, Kafka, Aragon, Breton, Garcia-Marquez |
| architectural references | Steven Holl, Peter Zumthor, Juhani Pallasmaa | Bernard Tschumi, Peter Eisenman, Daniel Libeskind, Wim Cuyvers, Raoul Bunschoten | Rem Koolhaas, Situationists International, Archigram, John Hejduk, Aldo Rossi |

1.1.3

DESCRIPTION – TRANSCRIPTION – PRESCRIPTION

Description, offering ways to evocatively describe the city and architecture on different levels, can be regarded as an overarching theme in the bridge of urban literacy. This chapter addresses the relationship between literary description and the lived experience of space. Through carefully describing, it is possible to grasp the relationship between the observing subjects and the architectural objects in the city, as well as the interactive relation between subject and object. Rather than on maps, surveys, theoretical investigations and planning documents, lived experience exists in people's thoughts and memories, and it is predominantly this space that we encounter in the evocative descriptions of places and spaces by literary writers. The skill of evocative description, I argue in this chapter, can be seen as a key notion in developing an "urban literacy". First, I will introduce the notion of description by formulating its definition and illustrating its relationship to literary writing. Second, the connection between the notion of description and lived experience will be anchored in a theoretical framework. This theoretical investigation leads particularly to the fields of the phenomenology of architecture¹¹ and the poetics of space.¹² The chapter highlights how description allows us to understand the lived experience of urban places by describing them as they appear to us, through sensory experience. Also, a number of contemporary positions regarding the use of evocative description will be presented. In the third part of this chapter, the potential of description for the practice of architecture will be illustrated by a close reading of the work of the American architect Steven Holl. Drawing on phenomenological themes such as "intertwining" and "anchoring" in both his written and architectural work, a close reading of his Kiasma museum in Helsinki will reveal the potential for evocative description as an operational concept for architectural design. As a closing of this chapter and opening towards new uses of description, I aim to make explicit how this could work in architectural education.

The chapter Transcription approaches the question of architecture and lived experience from the vantage point of social practices. It focuses on the social dimension of architecture and connects the role of activities, movements and events in the experience of architecture to the field of tension between individual and collective and between author and reader in literature. In this chapter, literary concepts such as perspective, character, temporality and narrative are brought into play. Especially the notion of narrative comes to the fore as an instrument linking space to the lived experience of its users. Narrative relates to activities unfolding in the course of the story; likewise activities unfold against the background of urban and

¹¹ Most authors in this field refer to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge, New York 2005; original edition: *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Paris (Gallimard) 1945. See for further discussion chapter 2.2 of this work.

¹² Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Boston, Massachusetts, 1994 [1964]

architectural space. By transcribing such literary concepts to architectural tools, I argue in this chapter, an opening can be given to including user's perspectives as well as aspects of activity and directionality in architectural research and design. First, the notion of transcription will be introduced by shining a light on its etymological background, which hints at a directional dimension, while the common use of the term transcription, as the step to move from one discipline or instrument to the other, will point the way to a multidisciplinary approach to the theme of the experience of places. Questioning the seemingly stable character of architecture, the notion transcription relates to the activities taking place within architecture. A number of literary examples will highlight this connection between architectural spaces and the spatial practices of their use. In the second part of the chapter, a theoretical framework will be established in which social spatial practices are addressed with reference to a number of theoretical positions. Among others, the viewpoints of Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau and Richard Sennett, considering the social aspects of spatial practices, will be discussed. The potential of scriptive techniques in revealing social aspects of places will be highlighted in the third part of this chapter, which shows how transcription can become an operational concept in architecture, in its capacity to narrate social-spatial practices. The written and architectural work of Bernard Tschumi serves as an analytical model in this part of the chapter. I argue that Tschumi's work offers a dynamic definition of architecture as a social discourse. The last paragraphs extend these views to contemporary architectural education.

The prescriptive branch of the triple bridge of this work takes into account the balance between reality and imagination. Prescription is the act of prospecting, predicting or constructing new situations. In literature, the construction of new worlds is not uncommon. Often, such literary world-views offer a critical account of society. Indeed, when applying the concept of prescription to architecture, the position of the architect designing for an unknown future is at stake. By definition, architects construct their imaginary account of the future world of which their built projects will take part, and they have to deal creatively with chance and indeterminacy. First, the notion of prescription will be defined in relation to reality, imagination and temporality in literary writing. A number of literary examples will show how writers have dealt with these aspects to express their accounts of time, place and urban experience. Literary writers can offer speculative accounts of future situations, or critical interpretations of existing realities. Especially surrealist and magic realistic literary practices will come to the fore as approaches merging reality and imagination. In all of these cases, writers construct a framework with spatial and temporal dimensions, which functions as a filter for selecting events and descriptions. The second part of this chapter will address this selective mechanism that writers employ in the presentation of their literary worlds, by discussing the literary concept of the chronotope, as introduced by the Russian philosopher and literary theorist Bakhtin. The chronotope offers a starting point for a theoretical exploration of the "time-places" that architects construct through imagination. In

the balance between reality and imagination, uncertainty is seen as a potentially productive factor for the design of urban futures. As examples of architectural prescription, the critical and imaginative practices of avant-garde groups such as Situationists International, Archigram and Superstudio will be discussed, as well as the strong relation that exists between architecture and fiction in the work of John Hejduk. The third part of the chapter opens a perspective on the operational potential of prescription for architectural writing, research and practice. A more extensive exploration of the prescriptive writings and architectural projects of Rem Koolhaas focuses on the critical aspect in prescriptive practice. His position as a critical writer as well as his design methods are clearly rooted in literary precedents. As a closure of the chapter, the potential of prescription in architectural education will be highlighted.

1.2 Trajectory

1.2.1 BRIDGING

I have explicitly chosen *bridging* as a method for this work: the bridging between literary and architectural insights, between different fields and approaches. A bridge is more than a mere connector of two sides, it also defines the banks and their hinterland more clearly, and the bridge is a place, a unity in itself. In *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*, Martin Heidegger made use of the bridge to explain how a building "gathers" the seemingly contrasting notions earth and sky, the mortals and the divine:

"The banks emerge only as the bridge crosses the stream . . . With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other's neighbourhood. The bridge *gathers* the earth as landscape around the stream. Thus it guides and attends the stream . . ."¹³

According to Heidegger, the bridge, even if it is an object, a *thing* in itself, allows a location to come into existence. A bridge is practical, in that it allows us to cross from one side to the other, but it is also an intellectual construct: it is through the bridge that the ambiguity of connectedness and separation becomes visible. As Georges Simmel has put it already before Heidegger in his seminal essay *Bridge and Door*, this renders the bridge also an aesthetic value in itself: "The bridge gives the eye the same support for connecting the sides of the landscape as it does to the

¹³ Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", originally published as *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken* in 1951. Quote from: Neil Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture. A reader in cultural theory*. Routledge, London/New York, 2003 [1997], p. 104

body for practical reality."¹⁴ Indeed, a bridge itself is both a mental and a physical construction, it renders meaning to both sides while it is experienced by the body that uses it to cross a river or an abyss. This work can be seen as a bridge, a conceptual bridge, that is, but one that in its very essence concerns architectural experience in all its aspects. This bridge of "urban literacy" does not only connect two banks or bridge one gap; rather, it opens up a field for architecture to explore, beyond the banks, but also the space of the bridge itself.

A crucial skill for practicing architects is the capacity to mediate: between different actors, between reality and the imagination of a future situation, between different scales and between different fields of knowledge. In the complexity of a building process, architects have to mediate between different actors: they have to be capable to switch between different languages, as it were, to communicate with clients, technicians of various fields, and users. By definition, architects operate between times, between the present and the imagination of future spatial situation – while aspects of historicity may also play a part in a design process. Within each project, a balance is also sought between various scales: the detail and the urban setting, the parts and the whole. Architects continuously mediate between material, technical, structural, cultural, social and economic fields of knowledge. We might argue that architects operate as generalists, rather than as specialists. Their "specialism" is precisely the capacity to make connections between the different fields, scales, actors and time frames, and to productively address the ambiguities that are at stake in each and every architectural project. Indeed, as architects are compelled to find a balance between various fields and approaches, a researcher in the field of architecture is confronted with the task to balance between the conceptuality of academic discourse and the experience of architecture's physical reality; especially when addressing themes such as poetic experience, the user's perspective, and indeterminacy, which are difficult to express in scientific terms. The very themes of this research work thus ask for an "in-between" positioning: in between the scientific and the artistic, between the author and the reader, the individual and the collective, between literature and architecture. Indeed, in this work, I move between fields, and I hope my writing to be both analytical and poetic. My approach is explicitly interdisciplinary and it is my conviction that using such an interdisciplinary approach is important in academic thinking, and specifically in thinking about architecture. My doctoral research thus addresses ways of mediating, and uses a mediating approach to do so: it offers a reading, interpretation and new organization of various architectural perspectives.

The ambition to bridge the gap between theory and practice, between architecture as a product of the mind and as an experienced and "lived" reality, implies that yet another gap has to be bridged: the one between scientific research and

¹⁴ Georg Simmel, "Bridge and Door", originally published in 1909. Quote from: Neil Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture. A reader in cultural theory*. Routledge, London/New York, 2003 [1997], pp. 66-67

the more artistic approach of literary writing and architectural design. If in this work I indeed choose to present literary references and literary techniques, I shall acknowledge their explicitly subjective nature and recognize the value of this subjectivity. Subjectivity, in my view, is not the opposite of objectivity: while a claim for objectivity can be made in the natural sciences, , in architecture, as well as in literature, both notions are at stake simultaneously, and it is in fact the very reversibility of subject and object that makes for a *lived* experience of architecture, as I will further discuss in the chapter Description. This is not to say, however, that my methodology as such totally breaks with scientific research, as the French philosopher and scientist Gaston Bachelard suggested in the introduction to his seminal book *The Poetics of Space*. Here, he describes a need to let go of rational, intellectual reflection in his search for a theory of the poetic imagination: "Little by little, this method, which has in favour its scientific prudence, seemed to me an insufficient basis on which to found a metaphysics of imagination".¹⁵ He argues even that the philosopher "must forget his learning and break with all his habits of philosophical research, if he wants to study the problems posed by the poetic imagination".¹⁶ Also Henri Lefebvre, whose notion of lived space¹⁷ is one of the foundational concepts of this work, warns against all too narrow scientific thinking. It seems that Lefebvre himself, as an author and thinker, in some ways applied a rather literary viewpoint, in the sense that he tells different story lines, looks from multiple perspectives, and explores his field of study by traveling through it rather than pretending to be scientific.¹⁸ While indebted to the positions of Bachelard and Lefebvre, my work is by no means an attempt to escape the methods of scientific research. As any work of scientific research, this project intends to reveal connections between matters or ideas that are not usually connected. It is based on a rigorous reading of relevant sources in the different fields that I intend to connect, and it investigates how the concepts I have attempted to formulate manifest themselves in architectural precedents, while presenting a set of tools that I have then tested in education and design. However, I do this to address topics (use, experience and imagination of places) that are indeed difficult to measure or verify. The looking glass of literature, the art of observing and imagining, of setting scenes and making narratives, offers a means to address these topics in another way. It is therefore that I have searched for the formulation of such an in-between approach by means of literature. The work itself, however, is not literary, nor should it be entirely defined as a study in architectural or spatial theory. In this project, architectural research can be understood as the reinterpreting and re-ordering of

15 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston Mass., 1994, [La poétique d'espace, Paris 1958] p. xviii

16 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston Mass 1994 p. xv

17 Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space*, Blackwell Publishing, London, 1991 [*La Production d'espace*, Editions Anthropos, Paris 1974]

18 For an account of Lefebvres literary approach, see also: Edward Soja, *Thirdspace, journeys to Los-Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*, Malden, Massachusetts 1996, pp. 54-55. See also the chapter prescription of this work.

knowledge from various disciplines, ultimately bridging all the different aspects at stake in a mediating composition. The work may best be characterized as critical theory, in the words of Jane Rendell:

". . . critical theories are forms of knowledge [that] differ from theories in the natural sciences because they are 'reflective' rather than 'objectifying' – they take into account their own procedures and methods. . . . Critical theories aim neither to provide a hypothesis nor to prescribe a particular methodology . . . Critical theory is instructive in offering many different ways of operating between 'two'".¹⁹

As will become clear in the next paragraphs, the way of operating between 'two' has in this case become a triad: a continuous shifting between three similar, but simultaneously very different paths.

1.2.2 A THREEFOLD COMPOSITION

In my quest for tools and insights from literature, composition has never been a theme as such – in fact, composition might be regarded as a skill that literary writers borrow from architects, rather than vice versa. However, I have found that in terms of research methodology, the crucial moment of design in this process has indeed been the very composition of this work as a threefold structure, discussing three diverging perspectives, together forming a bridge between both sides of the paradox that I want to address. If in an architectural design process, composition can be seen as a *moment of autonomy* of the architect within the heterogeneous setting that each project entails, one might argue that the composition of a work of architectural research is an act of design as well. The underlying threefold structure of this dissertation may not be brought to the fore as content, but it is the very composition that allows all the different components to be read and interpreted.

The threefold bridge that I have constructed in this work refers to a physical urban place: the Tromostovje (three bridges) in Ljubljana, Slovenia, designed in the 1930s by Jože Plečnik. This bridge, consisting of three branches with slightly different characters and directions, has been a highly inspirational reference for my project. While offering a model for my project, discussing three different perspectives of a literary approach to architecture, it also accommodates precisely Lefebvre's triad of social space: the conceived, the perceived and the lived. The image of this bridge can be seen as an intellectually conceived composition, looked at in bird's-eye view from the castle in Ljubljana; meanwhile it is a built reality in stone

19 With these lines, Rendell refers to Raymond Geuss' definition of critical theory (Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School 1981*), Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture. A Place Between*, I.B. Tauris, London/ New York 2006, pp. 8-9

and concrete upon which the inhabitants and visitors of Ljubljana have traced out their paths and constructed their memories and stories. In the final composition of my dissertation, I have devoted special attention to this bridge: it is the bridge itself that, in the form of the prologue and epilogue, forms the opening and closure of the work. The triple bridge has been simultaneously structure, method and metaphor of this work, and as such, the composition has been a leading principle to guide the intellectual decisions made throughout the process. The composition in three parts reappears throughout the work: not only in the description-transcription-prescription triad, but as well in the tripartite division of each chapter and subchapter, and ultimately in the composition of the whole work. Here, another threefold structure appears: the core of the three main chapters has a double skin. First, it has been covered by the introductory and concluding chapter- the Departure and Arrival of the journey. Then, an outer skin has been placed around the work like a translucent membrane, containing the Prologue on the front, and the Epilogue on the back. The outer skin is different in its appearance, as its style is literary rather than academic. However, it does cover (in the double meaning of the word) the very content of the work.

The threefold structure of this work is exemplary for the methodology by means of which it came about. Knowing that my quest for a literary approach to the experience, use and imagination of place would bring me to a wide variety of literary and spatial notions, I chose not to focus on one specific notion, but rather to explore a larger field to test my initial hypothesis. Not only did I introduce three notions, I also travelled parallel paths in order to explore my field, deepen my thoughts and elaborate my concepts. The use of three interconnected notions is a methodological choice for a dialectic approach. In *Thirdspace*, the book in which Edward Soja offers a contemporary reading of Lefebvre's work, the term *thirthing* is introduced, or more precisely "Thirthing-as-Othering". Soja states that, rather than thinking in binary opposites, it is intellectually productive to add a third term, which provides a new balance, another perspective, "a third possibility" or "moment".²⁰ This third position, according to Soja, is not a simple addition to the two others, it belongs to both of them and therefore breaks the oppositional composition. It does, in this way, provide an "open alternative".²¹ This idea of methodological openness created by a third moment is crucial to be able to address the ambiguities that I have intended to bring to the fore in this work. Indeed, I do not want to discuss the subject-object, reader-writer and reality-imagination pairs as opposites, but rather

20 Edward Soja, *Thirdspace, journeys to Los-Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*, Malden, Massachusetts 1996, p. 60. Soja shows, for instance, how social space in Lefebvres writing is distinguishable from mental and physical space, yet it also encompasses them. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre indeed continuously brings up such triads: mental-physical-social space, conceived-perceived-lived. As for Soja's own work, his key triad concerns the theoretical notions of social-spatial-historical, while his term "Thirdspace" indeed is intended to break open the common ways space is thought.

21 Ibidem, p.61

as active relationships. Especially when such two seemingly opposite notions start to work together, a third condition arises, and as I will argue further in this work, precisely this moment, this productive exchange, this *bridging moment* is the very moment of architecture – or of literature. The third condition is not just another, next to the previous two, it is a bridge that connects them. In regard to the relationship between architecture and literature, a third condition may be at stake as well, as Angelika Corbineau-Hoffmann states: "similar to how the writer brings truth and untruth together in a 'third', architecture as well builds, when entering literature, a third . . ." ²² Architectural motives in literature, she claims, can in their richness address many different aspects at once, thereby indeed constructing a third, an alternative – not by denying such categories, but rather by explicitly confronting them.²³ The precise nature of such a third condition remains vague on purpose, she explains, because its function is to trigger the curiosity of the reader, who is challenged to rethink his habit of thinking in binary oppositions. Indeed, when thinking of the connections between architecture and literature, and when trying, in this work, to make such connections operational, it is not the two disciplines themselves that are the key topic, but precisely the unnamable that lies in between, a third condition, which offers alternative possibilities to describe, understand and practice architecture.

1.2.2 PARALLEL PATHS

While the threefold composition forms an important support for the reader of this work, I have used triads as well during the whole research process. They functioned as a sort of methodological puzzles, and helped me to obtain an open gaze within in my project. In the first phase of this project, I ordered my work in three interconnected fields: the *theoretical positioning*, concerning the formulation of my ontological and epistemological perspective; the particular *context* that I wished to address; and, as a third category, the related *activities* in education and design practice. Under the first heading, the theoretical positioning, I noted as a starting point: "Architecture is not only a practice concerned with physical, measurable construction. Architecture deals with human experience of the physical environment. The ontological perspective of this work concerns the experiential aspects of architecture, and relates to the discourse of phenomenology of perception".

22 Angelika Corbineau-Hoffmann, "Architekturen der Vorstellung. Ansätze zu einer Geschichte architektonische Motive in der Literatur." in: Winfried Nerdinger (ed.) *Architektur wie sie im Buche steht, Fiktive Bauten und Städte in der Literatur*, Architekturmuseum der Technische Universität München, Verlag Anton Pustet, 2007, pp. 27-28 (translation from German KMH)

23 Ibidem, p. 38

I stated that place should be seen as a complex stratified phenomenon, a physical structure bearing layers of history, atmosphere and lived space. With that in mind, I stated that my contribution to knowledge would be to address the need to develop different ways to measure and analyse place, and to explore different instruments to do so. Second, to frame the context of the current urban and architectural debate that I wished to contribute to, I formulated the following themes: the debate on urban regeneration, as an urgent and topical context in which the need for new approaches was expressed; the public realm, as the social dimension of architecture and the city – precisely the place of intersection between the individual and the collective, the subject and the object, the author and the reader; and the third, but overarching theme of literature as a source for instruments and inspiration. These themes, together with the theoretical positioning, have been present throughout the whole process of this work, and have played a role as a filter for the third part: the selection of related activities in education and design practice. These activities, such as workshops with students, design studies or participation in conferences, allowed me to explore themes, methods and ideas.

The parallel paths I have followed in the course of this work (theoretical positioning, thematic explorations and related activities have indeed led to another triad of parallel paths: description, transcription and prescription. This triad is more than an organizational model alone; it has become a method of research in itself, a sequence that allowed me to make the necessary steps in the process, while the literary tools discussed in this sequence of chapters were simultaneously used in the process of the writing itself. If description is linked to observation, in the process of the research it has been the first step of reading and observing the field upon which I wished to operate. In this phase, the related literary skills of meticulous observation and evocative description were carried out in relation to the sources read and the themes explored. Observation can be understood as a form of close reading – this entailed the very precisely observation of detailed information while mapping out the field of possible connections. Meanwhile, rather than limiting my reading to the field of theory, I literally went out to observe the social and spatial context of this work: observing the spaces, scenes and processes of urban regeneration. In this phase, it was important to use different techniques of making notes: both using the flow of associative writing and making detailed lists of the observed spatial and social phenomena. Transcription, then, was the step to transcribe the knowledge from this first observational step to the specific task at hand – for instance, to link the literary instruments that I had studied to architectural questions. While I have discussed narrative as one of the key notions in the chapter entitled Transcription, precisely this notion of narrative – the composition of sequences, of the structure along which events take place – was crucial in the second phase of my work. Here, the storyline was composed – not as a singular narrative, developing a linear argument, but as an essentially *spatial* construction, which can be viewed from different perspectives, offering multiple narratives. This act of composition was strongly characterized by an aspect of play, or

rather, by the playful use of constraints. The structure of the chapters, the order of the paragraphs, the titles and the amount of space used for each fragment were all consciously defined and positioned as in a juggling game: carefully playing with weight and speed while balancing suspense. In the final phase of my project, steps towards the possible implications had to be considered. The notion of Prescription, as developed in the chapter with the same title, was defined as the act of imagining new situations, rather than as the literal writing of a recipe. In literature, the chronotope as the intellectual construction of a world-view has been a useful notion to discuss such imaginations, as well as the concept of scenario writing. In my research project, I indeed had the task to imagine how new, possible realities could be based on the knowledge that had been acquired and on the transcriptions that had been undertaken from one discipline to the other. Through on-site case studies with students in my seminars and design studios at Delft University of Technology, I have been able to test the techniques and insights developed in this work, indeed developing scenarios appropriate for the tasks at hand. However, have decided to limit the amount of attention devoted to such exercises and scenarios, as I intended to present my framework on another level: as a chronotope can accommodate a large variety of stories, I have attempted to outline an intellectual construction in which the different notions and insights that are brought into play can become operational for multiple tasks that architects, urban planners and other professionals dealing with the built environment are facing, today and in the future.

1.3 Departure

1.3.1 PRECEDENTS AND PREDECESSORS

Before entering these paths, I need to map out the most important voices that have served as continuous points of reference during my journey. The frame of reference for this work is a mixture of philosophical, sociological, architectural and literary sources, without foregrounding one or the other. Questions from the field of architecture and urban planning are connected to literary viewpoints, and placed in a theoretical context provided by philosophical and sociological theories. By making a number of connections between existing concepts and disciplines I hope to open new perspectives rather than solidifying them. Instead of aiming to offer an entirely new theoretical perspective, I thus draw on existing theories. By bringing these theories together, rearranging them and reinterpreting them, showing their reciprocity and connections, my intention is to place them in a new light to offer an alternative way of teaching, practicing and thinking about architecture. Literary works, such as novels, poetry and other writings on places and spaces thus function as a key source for study, intellectual reflection and inspiration. I have to acknowledge here, that my choice of literary sources is to a certain extent arbitrary. Of course, a number of "usual suspects" in the field of literature, such as Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Walter Benjamin and Italo Calvino feature in this work. However, I chose not to devote an extensive amount of attention to them, as other scholars have already discussed their work in detail. Instead I have chosen to bring other works and literary positions to the fore, which have been less discussed in the field of architecture, such as the experimental work of Oulipo or the work of South American magic realist writers. Admittedly, my perspective is determined by my own cultural and geographical background. The literary sources discussed in this work derive predominantly from Northwest European literary culture, and the work is relatively ignorant to other, for example Asian perspectives.²⁴ Specifically, a large number of the literary references in this work concern Dutch literary works. I am certain that many appropriate references could also be found in the exhaustive amount of literature by many other writers from all over the world – many of which I have simply not yet encountered in my readings. Also, as I have noticed along the way, the more we read, the more we become aware of all the books we'll never be able to read. Rather than claiming with this work to be a specialist in literature, I trust this to be indeed a place of departure for many more journeys in the world of literature.

24 While the urban and architectural places described in these literary sources are most probably also culturally and geographically determined, I assume that the scriptive tools that writers use are more general.

While the gaze of the literary writer offers a central perspective in this work, I am indebted to the works of a number of philosophers and spatial theorists who have provided me with the theoretical frame of reference necessary to connect the insights from literature to theoretical discourse concerning the experience, use and imagination of architecture. Especially the discourse on the phenomenology of architecture has been of great importance in enabling this work to find its grounding. The very point of departure for phenomenological thought regarding architectural perception is the work of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who placed "embodied experience" at the centre of his philosophical thinking. His notion of description, an important first step in his "phenomenological method", has become an important step in developing the theoretical framework of this thesis.²⁵ Gaston Bachelard's search for a phenomenology of the poetic imagination has enabled me to make important connections between literature and the experience of architecture. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard speaks of "transsubjectivity", and argues that phenomenology is the only academic arena that provides the possibility of conceptualizing the subjectivity of the poetic experience.²⁶ Naturally, I have followed a number of architects and writers who have further discussed phenomenology in the field of architecture. Of these writers, Alberto Perez-Gomez and Juhani Pallasmaa²⁷ have also provided inspirational insights for this work. Regarding sensory perception and other experiential aspects of architecture and urban places I have learned much from the writings of Danish architects and planners Steen Eiler Rasmussen and Jan Gehl.²⁸ Human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has, through his insightful books such as *Topophilia* and *Space and Place*, taught me much about the emotional relationship between people and places. Another field of theory to which I owe a debt of inspiration is that of spatial thought, particularly connecting space with its social components. An important source of inspiration for this project has been Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*.²⁹ His insights concerning user's practices, specifically the role of stories in understanding urban spaces at different levels, have provided clues for the use of literary tools in urban

25 This phenomenological position will be present throughout this work, and will most thoroughly be discussed in the chapter Description.

26 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston Mass, 1994 [1964], p. xix: "Only phenomenology -- that is to say, consideration of the onset of the image in an individual consciousness -- can help us restore the subjectivity of images and to measure their fullness, their strength and their transsubjectivity".

27 For instance: Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa, Alberto Pérez-Gomez, *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture*, A+U July 1994 (special issue); Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production*, MIT Press, 2004; See also the concise essay by Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, London, 1996

28 Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture*. London 1959; reprint Cambridge, Mass. (MIT Press) 1993; Jan Gehl, *Life Between Buildings. Using Public Space*, Danish Architectural Press, Copenhagen 2006 [1971]

29 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988, p.xxi [1984, original version in French: *Arts de faire*, 1984]

analysis and practice. Along the way of this research process, I realized how much the thinking of Henri Lefebvre resonates throughout my work. Unintended, he has become one of the protagonists of my plea for the multiperspectival approach to contemporary questions of urban experience. Through his ideas on lived experience, the social aspects of space, and spatial imagination, his critical thinking about space has become not so much the leading thread as rather a constant voice of reference.³⁰

Of course, I am not the first to draw on the connection between architecture, city and literature. Sociologists and philosophers have often deployed literary references to support their claims about life in the modern city.³¹ More specifically, researchers from the fields of architecture and literature have drawn in detail from the connections between the two domains. In the 1970s, Ellen Eve Frank was one of the first scholars to explore the connection between architecture and literature. In her study *Literary Architecture*, she brought to the fore the architectural features in the literary work of the writers Walter Pater, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Marcel Proust and Henry James.³² Jennifer Bloomer, in her research on architecture and text, explored how literature can be like architecture in terms of construction, assemblage and use of analogy; she compared, for instance, the complex spatial constructions of James Joyce's writings to Piranesi's etchings.³³ American scholar Marilyn Chandler discussed how dwelling featured in American literature.³⁴ In Europe, the use of writing as a tool in the analysis of places has been studied by Bartlett professor of architecture Jane Rendell, who uses literary techniques not only to analyse urban sites but also as a form of art critique. Katja Grillner of KTH Stockholm also sees writing as a productive tool in architectural research. Her dissertation made use of dialogue as a literary form, which allowed her to explore different positions, both historical and contemporary, in landscape analysis.³⁵ Finnish geographers Pauli Tapani Karjalainen and Paivi Kymäläinen have focused

30 However, this work is not to be seen as a scholarly work on Lefebvre's theories; other researchers have provided most interesting in-depth readings of Lefebvre's work. See for instance the recently published dissertations of Lukasz Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space: Architecture, Urban Research, and the Production of Theory*, University of Minnesota Press 2011 (forthcoming) and Panu Lehtovuori, *Experience and Conflict: The Production of Urban Space*, Ashgate, London 2010

31 In this work, I refer for instance to the writings of sociologist Richard Sennett, and to philosopher Gilles Deleuze's idea that writers can be seen as "symptomatosigsts" of society.

32 Ellen Eve Frank, *Literary Architecture: Essays Toward a Tradition: Walter Pater, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Marcel Proust, Henry James*. University of California Press, Berkeley 1979

33 Jennifer Bloomer, *Architecture and the Text: The (s)cripts of Joyce and Piranesi*, Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 1993

34 Marilyn R. Chandler, *Dwelling in the Text. Houses in American fiction*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991

35 Katja Grillner, *Ramble, Linger and Gaze*, KTH Department of Architecture, Stockholm, 2000

on the idea of "writing place" or site-specific writing in relation to literature.³⁶

Recently, as a result of a project at the Faculty of Architecture in Munich, an extensive publication appeared in German, discussing the reciprocal relationship between imagined and real architectural spaces. Next to essays exploring, for instance, the roles of architecture in literature, the book presents a large number of models and drawings as responses to literary texts, as well as examples of drawings by literary writers and vice versa.³⁷ Portuguese architect Pedro Gadanho has also provided interesting reflections on architecture and fiction in his "Bookazine" series *Beyond*,³⁸ while the first international conference on Architecture and Fiction in Lisbon in 2010 was his initiative. In the academic architectural circles in the Netherlands and Belgium, Bart Verschaffel, Geert Bekaert, Wim van den Bergh, Ton Verstegen and Gijs Wallis de Vries have touched upon the theme in their teaching and writing. Dutch philosopher René Boomkens showed, through the writings of Walter Benjamin, how the boulevards of late nineteenth-century Paris provided the backdrop for a new sort of public life.³⁹ Belgian literary theorist Bart Keunen described how the early metropolis has been depicted in literature,⁴⁰ while Belgian architects Wim Cuyvers and Christophe van Gerrewey, each in their own way, touched upon the relation between architecture and literature as well: Cuyvers by transcribing literary images and insight into design, while reflecting on architecture by means of text;⁴¹ Van Gerrewey by writing architectural fiction as a form of architectural criticism.⁴² Although in this work, I have not fully addressed the work of all these scholars and architects in detail, I do gratefully acknowledge their endeavours in introducing literature in architectural thought. While their work is often very specific, for instance investigating the presence of architectural notions in specific works of literature, my attempt has been to broaden such perspectives – to discuss more generally the merits that a literary approach has to offer to understand and address the experiential aspects of architecture.

36 See for example Katja Grillner, 'Writing Architecture', in: *01.AKAD Beginnings - Experimental Research in Architecture and Design*, AKAD, Stockholm 2005, pp. 64-67; Jane Rendell, 'Writing in place of speaking', in: Sharon Kivland (ed.), *Transmission: Speaking and Listening*, Sheffield 2003; Päivi Kymäläinen, *Geographies in Writing - Re-imagining place*, Nordia Geographical Publications, Oulu, 2005

37 Winfried Nerdinger (ed.) *Architektur wie sie im Buche steht, Fiktive Bauten und Städte in der Literatur*, Architekturmuseum der Technische Universität München, Verlag Anton Pustet, 2007

38 Pedro Gadanho (ed.) *Beyond. Shortstories on the post-contemporary*, SUN Publishers, Amsterdam, 2009-2010

39 For a discussion of the development of modern Paris and Haussmann's influence on the experience of the public, see René Boomkens, *Een drempelwereld. Moderne ervaring en stedelijke openbaarheid*. Rotterdam (NAI uitgevers) 1998, pp. 60-64.

40 Bart Keunen, *De Verbeelding van de Grootstad. Stads- en wereldbeelden in het proza van de moderniteit*, VUB Press, Gent University, Brussels 2000 [*The Imagination of the Metropolis. City- and Worldviews in the prose of modernity*]

41 Wim Cuyvers, *Tekst over Tekst*, Stroom/Voorkamer, The Hague 2004

42 Christophe van Gerrewey, *Werkelijkheid zonder weerga. Fictionele architectuurkritieken*, WZW Editions&Productions, Gent, 2004, published as issue #65 of the series *Vlees & Beton*.

1.3.2 COMING TO TERMS

Now that a number of important voices that have influenced this work have already come to the fore, I wish to say a few more words about the thematic foundations on which this “bridge” has been built. Especially when working in a field of tension between the disciplines of architecture and literature, when making sidesteps to philosophy and critical theory, and when aiming to discuss issues of ambiguity, there is the risk of getting lost in a confusion of tongues. Therefore, I wish to highlight a number of terms that I will use throughout this work. Recurring themes in this endeavour are lived experience, use and imagination. Also my deliberate choice to use the notion place, rather than space, which will be explained here. Finally, I will shine a light on my understanding of literature and literary writers. When speaking of the lived experience of place, I refer to the way places nestle in people’s minds; how colours, smells, sounds and materials take part in this process. I recall the coast of a Nordic city in summer, the sound of my footsteps, the ticking of ropes against masts, the silence of water, the soft murmuring of people. I feel rough brickwork touching the palm of my hand when I walk past the wall of a summer house, the uneven ground of sand and rocks under my feet; I see reflections of changing traffic lights in glass and steel façades at the crossing point of a road in a vibrant town in central Europe; I smell The Hague in spring, the wet streets after rain, the salty air, the linden trees. Lived experience connects to the notion of perception as theorized in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical work *Phenomenology of Perception*. Indeed, sensory perceptions play an important role in the lived experience of places. However, lived experience is more than perception alone: it is intrinsically related to the emotional responses that people develop to the places they visit, to memory, stories and myths. Henri Lefebvre’s definition of lived space, introduced in *The Production of Space*, points at a form of social space that encompasses the way in which space is experienced, remembered and lived through by inhabitants and users.⁴³ When using the term experience or experiential in this work, I refer to this broad notion of experience, including both perceived and lived aspects.

A second theme present in this work is the use of place, the activity of people inhabiting, using or passing it. Even if architecture is generally considered stable, built of matter, it becomes dynamic through the activity, people, movements and events it accommodates. In the field of sociology and philosophy, the role of architecture as a setting for human life, connecting spaces, people and activities, has been intensively discussed. Therefore, when addressing the social aspects of place in this work, I refer to notions derived from these fields. The idea of social space, for instance, comes to the fore in the theories of the before mentioned Henri Lefebvre,

⁴³ Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space*, Blackwell Publishing, London, 1991 [La Production d’espace, Editions Anthropos, Paris 1974]

bvre, who states that space, by definition, is socially produced, and thus produced by its users and inhabitants: the user can be seen as a co-producer of place – it is only through him or her that places become meaningful. Similarly, Michel de Certeau addresses the spatial practices of daily life, such as walking, talking and storytelling as valuable sources for understanding the city. Important when considering the role of the user are also the gradations between what is public, private or collective, and particularly the notion of the public realm. Indeed, such notions make clear that place is never neutral: it is owned, used, experienced, shared, conquered or defended by people.

The third term that I wish to clarify is imagination. I have highlighted imagination as the creative activity of both writers and designers that is inextricably bound with the making of new situations – whether this concerns stories or new spatial realities. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard speaks of the “poetic imagination” as a spark of the soul, a sudden moment when an unusual image appears to the poet.⁴⁴ Imagination is thus seen as a creative act, as the capability to receive or produce original images. Imagination is a powerful human skill, much underestimated in society and discourse, as Juhani Pallasmaa argues in his book about imaginations and imagery in architecture.⁴⁵ The capacity to produce mental images is key to every form of cultural production, such as poetry, literature, theatre or architecture. Literary works of fiction and poetry are by definition mental worlds created by the imagination of the writer – however, different degrees of imaginative power can be distinguished in the extent that these mental worlds are related to reality. In the chapter Prescription, I will further draw on literary orientations such as the surrealist movement, which placed imagination at the very centre of its creative activity. Regarding the difference between reality and imagination, Pallasmaa refers to Jean-Paul Sartre’s discussion on the imagination in *The Psychology of Imagination*,⁴⁶ stating that perception is directly related to the real world, to the embodied, material reality, while imagination refers to an “other” world. This other world may be rooted in reality or may project future realities – but it never coincides completely with the “real” world. Precisely this field of tension between reality and imagination is at stake in architecture: when designing new spatial situations, drawing the outlines of something that does not yet exist. In this work, imagination is thus seen as a creative act of fiction: the imagination of another situation, another world if you will, that is not yet existent, but that is rooted, perhaps, in an existing reality.

⁴⁴ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space. The classic look at how we experience intimate places*, Beacon Press, Boston 1994 [1964] [La poétique d’espace, Paris 1958]

⁴⁵ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Embodied Image. Imagination and Imagery in Architecture*, AD Primers, Wiley, Chichester 2011

⁴⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*, Citadel Press, Secaucus, NJ, 1948, as quoted in Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Embodied Image. Imagination and Imagery in Architecture*, AD Primers, Wiley, Chichester 2011, pp. 33-34

Whether the spatial examples mentioned in this work concern architectural objects, urban scenes, or landscapes, they always have in common the focus on place. However, in the architectural debate as well as in philosophical discourse, space has become a dominant notion over place as has been shown by the philosopher Edward S. Casey, who in his seminal book *The Fate of Place* has argued for a reevaluation of the concept of place. Place, as he argues, is more connected to lived experience, to the relation that people have with their environment. It is his definition of place that I make use of in this work. It has to be noted, however, that space and place are used in different ways by different authors – and in different fields. For instance, Michel de Certeau, an author much present in this work, states instead that “space is a practiced place”. For him, place is the mere location, the neutral site upon which spatial practices may develop. The practices bring about movements and events – in other words, they make places dynamic. Henri Lefebvre, in his conceptualization of “social space”, which is presented in this work as well, indeed also utilizes the term space. However, his lived space, a notion that I will frequently refer to, has strong placial qualities: it is site-specific, experienced and lived through by its users and producers. In this work I have chosen to use the word place rather than space, because I understand place as site-specific, loaded with meaning attributed to it by users and inhabitants, and therefore socially engaged. I understand space as a more abstract notion, which can be described in vectors and measurements, and has less to do with the site-specific lived aspects of architectural experience that I am interested in. Three other notions connected to place-attachment and lived experience may clarify my position regarding place: Christian Norberg-Schulz’s notion of the Genius Loci, Yi-Fu Tuan’s concept “topophilia”; and Gernot Böhme’s understanding of atmosphere.⁴⁷ The term Genius Loci points at the spirit of place, suggesting that place indeed is “lived”. According to Norberg-Schulz, place is thus more than an abstract location: it is built out of concrete, perceivable characteristics that people psychologically relate to. He argues that place has an existential meaning: human identity is strongly connected to the identity of place. The notion Topophilia embroiders on this connection between people and place, and points at the love that people have for places. Atmosphere, as defined by Gernot Böhme,⁴⁸ entails two sides of the lived experience of place: the perceived reality and the moods and affects of the perceiving subjects. In Böhme’s view, the subject-object relation is thus crucial for the understanding of atmosphere and the “situatedness” of people.

Finally, I shall devote a few words to my use of terms connected to literature and writers. In this work I use a broad definition of literature, as the artistic discipline of writing fiction, novels, poetry and the like. I am aware that earlier investigations into the parallels between architecture and literature have included the idea of architecture as a language, or have explored syntax for its compositional value. Also

⁴⁷ The here mentioned theoretical positions will be discussed in further detail in the chapter Description of this work.

⁴⁸ Gernot Böhme, *Architektur und Atmosphäre*, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München, 2006

the issue of semiotics has been an intensely discussed theme at the crossing point of architecture and literature. For this work, I have chosen to leave these themes aside, and to focus on another issue, namely the modus operandi of the literary writer – the way a literary writer observes, describes and imagines the world, and particularly the built environment. When speaking of a literary gaze or a literary approach, I thus mean that such a gaze or approach is informed by the point of view of the literary writer. Acknowledging that, of course, “the” literary writer does not exist, I do attribute some skills to literary writers in general, and I assume that they share, to some extent, a number of techniques. Inevitable for a work like this, supported by a wide range of sources, I will often refer to authors and writers. While both words are commonly used as synonyms, I have attempted to allocate the word writer to literary writers, and to use the word author in a broader sense, for authors in other fields.

1.3.3 PROJECTS ON THE WAY

The activities connected to this work took place on different levels: in academic thought, in education and in design practice. They did not offer directly measurable results like the data and diagrams of scientific experiments, but the thoughts and insights developed through these activities form the humus of this work. The academic activities concerned theoretical readings and reflections. An important part of the research process has been the academic exchange with colleague researchers, architects and editors. In this respect, my involvement in the Architectural Positions project at the Faculty of Architecture at Delft University of Technology, consisting of a series of seminars around the theme of architecture and the public sphere in 2007 and the publications of an anthology on the same theme,⁴⁹ was an excellent way to deepen my understanding of the relation between architecture and the public sphere, to reflect on theoretical notions, and to learn from the different positions that architects take in this field. The editorial board of the architecture journal *OASE* served as a platform for academic reflection on a wide range of topics. The editorship of issues on, for instance, *Architecture & Literature*, *Public Space and the Public Sphere*, and *Productive Uncertainty*, were intensive projects that, by means of discussions, critical reading and reflection, helped me to set my field of reference and sharpen my definitions. Teaching, in different forms, has been an ongoing activity throughout the whole process. It has offered a broad field to test the power of the concepts developed through this work in the context of specific sites and assignments. For example, the Public Realm diploma studios that I taught in Delft between 2005 and 2011 all dealt with urban regeneration projects.

⁴⁹ Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (eds), *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere*, SUN Publishers, Nijmegen 2009

It was through these projects that I could formulate the need for an alternative, more site-specific and more user-oriented approach to urban regeneration. The studio also addressed the topicality of the theme, by collaborating with local parties such as the municipality and housing corporations. The City & Literature studio, an elective master course I initiated and taught in Delft, served as a laboratory of reading, creative writing, exploring architecture's relation to literature, and testing the use of literary techniques as design tools. Intensive workshops, both in Delft and abroad, gave the opportunity to focus on a central tool or concept, by actively discussing its implications with students, using it to explore a territory, and projecting it on a specific assignment.

Finally, it was in design practice that the topicality of the theme and the usefulness of the approach could be tested. In the early stage of this project, I combined the theoretical work with architectural practice. The NDSM project in Amsterdam was an urban regeneration project, in which the reuse of the former ship wharf as a cultural breeding place was seen as a catalyst for larger urban redevelopments in the area, the former industrial docks of Amsterdam North. Our architecture studio De Ruimte⁵⁰ was involved in the development of the whole wharf, and designed and built the skatepark, which opened in 2004. From this position, it was possible to be closely involved in such an alternative approach to urban regeneration, and be aware of its strengths and vulnerabilities. In other urban regeneration projects, my involvement was on a more conceptual level: dealing with analysis and projection rather than with the construction process itself. In 2006-2007, I was part of a design team that explored the potential development of a large industrial peninsula in Tallinn.⁵¹ We developed urban scenarios in relation to specific themes that arose from a focused reading of the site as well as of the uncertainties that the urban development of Tallinn was facing. In Helsinki, I was able to test literary tools in the critical analysis of Helsinki's plans for redevelopment of harbour area Kalasatama. These critical investigations led to the formulation of an alternative strategy, which generated a debate in the Finnish architectural review ARK with the City Planning Office.⁵² Other activities that allowed me to confront my ideas with the reality of current urban developments included taking part in the jury process of a competition for waterfront developments in Amsterdam North⁵³ and taking part in

50 Architecture Studio *de Ruimte* was a collective of Iris de Kievith, Iris Schutten, Sebas Veldhuisen, Job Nieman and myself, founded in 1994 in The Hague by Schutten, de Kievith and Veldhuisen. Projects included urban interventions and the re-use of buildings, with an emphasis on social and technological sustainability.

51 Urban study "Ecobay" for Paljassaare, Tallinn, Estonia, with 3+1 architects in Tallinn, NFA from Paris and Livady architects from Helsinki, 2006-2007

52 These investigations were carried out with the team of Studio Butter-Briceño, Helsinki. The results were published as: Klaske Havik, Peter Ch. Butter, Juan-Luis Briceno, "Kalasatama reconsidered", in *ARK Finnish Architectural Review* 2/2009, pp. 76-79

53 NAI-Ymere competition project Open Fort 400, 2009. I was involved as secretary of the jury. The report has been published in *Waterfront Visions. Transformations in North Amsterdam*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2009

a design team of Stroom to propose a strategy for the public domain in Scheveningen-bad, the beach resort of The Hague.⁵⁴

I have decided not to include all the material of these exploratory projects in this dissertation, even if they are of interest to explain how the ideas developed in this work can be used in practice. Instead, I have tried to keep the work concise. The above-mentioned design projects might also, precisely through their site-specificity, limit the scope for the reader. I did include a selection of the educational projects, because these allow me to show how the knowledge developed in this work can be conveyed to (future) practitioners of spatial design.

54 Design research team *Atelier Naar Scheveningen* has been initiated by Stroom The Hague in 2011 and consists of Marcel Musch, Kai van Hasselt, Han Dijk, Arjan Harbers, Coen-Martijn Hofland and myself.

2 DESCRIPTION

2.1 DESCRIPTION

2.1.1 Writing as: evocative description

"... this is how space begins, with words only, signs traced on the blank page. To describe space: to name it, to trace it, like those portolano-makers who saturated the coastlines with the names of harbours, the names of capes, the names of inlets, until in the end the land was only separated from the sea by a continuous ribbon of text. Is the aleph, that place in Borges from which the entire world is visible simultaneously, anything other than an alphabet?"⁵⁵

In *Species of Spaces*,⁵⁶ Polish-French writer Georges Perec attempts to describe various kinds of spaces, sorted in scale from the space of the page, through spaces such as the bedroom, the apartment building and the city, to infinite space. Perec describes these spaces in various ways: by providing a seemingly objective survey of details, by giving names, by measuring, by tracing activities during a day, by describing memories of spaces, by imagining. Space begins with words, states Perec, and, if it is indeed by words that spaces can begin to exist, I would start here my argument that it is through *evocative description* that we can come to understand how architecture is used, experienced and imagined. In Latin, the verb *scribere* means not only to write, but also to scratch: the physical act of scratching figures or letters on a surface. In that sense, the activity of writing and that of drawing appear to be closely related. *De-scribere*, then, becomes to write-scratch *as* or *from* something: an exemplar or model, to copy.⁵⁷ Indeed, description is usually related to an object, one describes *something* in such a detailed or vivid way that it can be imagined; from the description, the reader can draw a picture of the object in his mind *as if* it were real. Thus, in the etymological sense of the word, a description of a place is a copy of that place in words. Words that, in turn, evoke the image of the place in the mind of the reader. Therefore, to be able to describe, be it in text or in drawing (scratching), one has to be able to observe, and to perceive the object in all its complexity. In order to understand spaces and places, and to understand how we "live" them, one should start by closely observing them, by identifying their spatial characteristics, as well as their atmosphere and the activities and trajectories of their inhabitants. In this chapter, I will first discuss evocative description in the sense of *writing as*, highlighting the capacity of literary writers to picture vivid accounts of places; then, I will use the idea of *writing from* to show how different purposes in a novel can be served by architectural descriptions; and finally, I will

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⁵⁵ Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces*, Penguin Classics, London 2008, p. 13 [Espèces d' espace, Editions Galilée, Paris 1974]. The *naming* of places will be a recurring theme in this work; the work of Borges and specifically the Aleph will again appear in the chapter Prescription.

⁵⁶ Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces*, Penguin Classics, London 2008, p. 13 [Espèces d' espace, Editions Galilée, Paris 1974]

⁵⁷ Eric Partridge (ed), *Origins, a Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, Greenwich House, New York 1983, p.598

argue that to be able to produce evocative descriptions, writers cannot do without the skills of observation and perception.

Literary writers are uniquely qualified to observe and describe the spaces in which they move – places, buildings and landscapes – on several levels. Their descriptions are often very detailed, carefully sketching an image of the place and evoking a certain atmosphere. Indeed, several theorists studying the interplay between people and their surroundings suggest that literature could be an important source of information. Human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, who is interested in how people relate to places, how they perceive and remember their physical environment, writes: “the forceful and precise articulation of environmental attitudes requires high verbal skills. Literature rather than social science surveys provides us with the detailed and finely shaded information on how individuals perceive their worlds.”⁵⁸ Yi-Fu Tuan often refers to the capacity of the literary writer to record “intricate worlds of human experience”.⁵⁹ In his book *Topophilia*, which discusses the intimate connection between places and people, he states that: “the ways in which people perceive and evaluate [are] varied. No two persons see the same reality. No two social groups make precisely the same evaluation of the environment. The scientific view itself is culturally determined – one possibility among many.”⁶⁰ Finnish geographer Pauli Tapani Karjalainen also studies the link between people and their environment, and sees how the meaning of places in people’s personal lives is reflected in literature. For Karjalainen, literature is the key source for his notion of “geobiography”, which he defines as an “expression of the course of life as it relates to the places lived”.⁶¹ Indeed, in literature this intimate bond between people and place, which is different for each and every person, is sometimes evocatively described. In literary writings on places, however, precisely this aspect of subjectivity lures around the corner, blurring the level of ‘reality’ of the description. The places in novels, poems, biographies and letters indeed go without a sharp distinction between reality and fiction. Places in literature can exist in reality, or find their ground, partly or totally, in the imagination of their writer. When real places feature in novels, their depiction moves between the objective description of their characteristics and the description informed by the subjective experience of a (real or fictional) character. This tension also exists between the collective and the individual: through literary description, the individual account of a place (or activity, or event), be it based on the author or on a fictional character, is communicable to the collective audience of the readers. French theorist Gaston Bachelard, who investigated the poetic imagination in relation to intimate spaces in his seminal book *The Poetics of Space*, called this exchange between the collective and the individual experience “transsubjectivity”, wondering how such a “singular, short-lived event [can] react on other minds and in other hearts.”⁶² Bachelard speaks specifically of poetry, which may indeed be

58 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia. A study of environmental perception, attitudes and values*, University of Minnesota, Prentice hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 1974, p.49

59 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place. The perspective of experience*. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 1977, p.7

60 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia. A study of environmental perception, attitudes and values*. University of Minnesota/ Prentice hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 1974, p.5

61 Pauli Tapani Karjalainen, “On Geo-biography”, in Virve Sarapik and Kadri Tüür (eds.), *The City -- Topias and Reflections* (conference book), *Koht ja Paik / Place and Location III*, Tallinn 2003, pp. 87-93

62 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Boston, Massachusetts, 1994 [1964], pp. xviii-xix

seen as the form of literature in which the subject-object inversions come most fully into play. However, Bachelard’s question is also relevant on a more general level: it essentially points at the complexity of creation and experience of a work, either a work of literature, or a work of art or architecture: the tension between the individual maker and the unknown collective of the readers, users or consumers. Indeed, a literary description, being the product of the personal imagination of a writer, can reach a large audience of readers, and make them become emotionally involved.

Only seldom can literary writers be said to offer a ‘neutral’ account of the places they describe; rather, they bring to light aspects of atmosphere, activities, memories, rituals and emotion. Mere description, in a scientific, objectified way, does not allow for such “lived” accounts of how people experience space. It is the quality of literary descriptions that they *evoke*. To evoke is to “bring to mind a memory or feeling... to provoke a particular reaction or feeling; to make beings appear who are normally invisible”.⁶³ Evocation is undoubtedly one of the indispensable qualities of good poets and literary writers: through their evocative descriptions, the reader is able to vividly imagine the spaces and places at stake. Likewise, the designs of architects, by means of sketches, models, drawings or text, also evoke a situation or atmosphere. Indeed, in design projects, the architect is compelled to present buildings and spaces that do not yet exist. Dutch architect Michiel Riedijk states that:

“Evocation is a precondition for design. Every sketch, study or model aims to evoke an image or the impact of something that will only exist in the future. It aims to evoke a world that will not be real until the design has been executed in wood, masonry and glass. Designing implies the orchestration of the imagination”.⁶⁴

Such evocation requires more than just offering an image of a future materialized reality. Not only should design evoke a future material reality, but also a possible future experience or sense of place. The architect, to some extent responsible for the environment in which people live, needs to be able to describe this environment beyond the visible and the material: to give an account of the spatial as well as the social and perceptual levels of his future creation. Therefore, if we indeed intend to use “description” as an operational concept in the spatial design disciplines, the word *evocative* is important to use as an adjective. When looking at the evocative descriptions of architecture by literary writers, it becomes clear that architects can learn from their skills.

The call for evocatively describing places is by no means a merely nostalgic one. Considering the current condition of a global and highly “networked” society, in which human interactions seem to become less and less place-bound, it would seem that theories drawing on the intricate relationship between man and place have lost their relevance. I argue that the contrary is true: in the era of globalization, evocative description of local specifics becomes more urgent than ever. In recent debate, an increase in attention for the local is noticeable, often

63 Encarta World English Dictionary: to evoke

64 Michiel Riedijk, “Wings of Beeswax”, in: *Architectural Positions. Architecture, modernity and the Public Sphere*, Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (eds.), Sun Publishers, Amsterdam, 2009, p. 319

as a counterpoint to the global. The conference *Global Places, Local Spaces*,⁶⁵ for example, held at the Bartlett School of Planning in London in 2006, addressed this seemingly oppositional connection between the local and the global. Especially in large urban projects, sometimes crossing national boundaries, the role of the local becomes all the more important. Dutch cultural philosopher René Boomkens, who investigates the experience of public urban space, has noticed a renewed interest in the 1980s in novels and documentaries highlighting local practices, which corresponds with a critique on the rather distanced, generalizing approach to the city that characterized modernist and functionalist thought.⁶⁶ According to Boomkens the need for such local narratives is even more topical nowadays: they offer a sense of specificity in an ever globalizing culture. As Boomkens states:

“These are not attempts to glorify the local past, nor exercises in futile nostalgia, but attempts to play out the confrontation between the new discontinuities of global urban culture and the fragile continuity of . . . traditional local culture. . . . The fact that we are still, to a certain extent, able to identify with that history, to feel attached to the life it represents, and feel at home in its public sphere, depends completely on the fact that we are still able to resurrect the continuity in ever new narratives on our urban culture, its practices and localities”.⁶⁷

Indeed, parallel to global developments, evocative description can be used as a device to identify and investigate local characteristics, as well as generating new connections between the global and the local.

46

2.1.2 Writing from: architecture in literary descriptions

Let us take a closer look at how places figure in the world of literature. It is argued that places are so present in literature because we tend to structure our memory on the basis of places.⁶⁸ Naturally, in many literary writings the built environment is a décor, generating a setting, sketching an atmosphere in which the narrative unfolds. Here, architecture has an illustrative

65 Planning Research Conference *Global Places, Local Spaces*, Bartlett School of Planning, London, April 5-7, 2006

66 René Boomkens, *Een Drempelwereld. Moderne ervaring en stedelijke openbaarheid*, NAi Publishers, Rotterdam, 1998, p. 34.

67 René Boomkens, *The Temporalities of the Public Sphere* in: OASE77 *Into the Open. Accommodating the Public*, Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, Hans Teerds (eds.), Nai Publishers, Rotterdam 2008, pp. 18-19

68 “Zum anderen kommen Bauten und Orten der dichterische Evokation durch Sprache oder Text besonders entgegen, denn das menschlichen Gedächtnis ist topologisch, ortsbezogen strukturiert”, states Winfried Nerdinger, in *Architektur wie sie im Buche steht. Fiktive Bauten und Städte in der Literatur*, Architekturmuseum der Technische Universität München, Verlag Anton Pustet, 2007, p.9

function.⁶⁹ In this chapter I will illustrate some other ways in which evocative descriptions of places figure in literature. For instance, architectural descriptions in literature can serve memory, giving an account of a past or present world; they can be used to amplify the emotions of the characters in a novel; they can strengthen a narrative by the symbolic meaning of buildings; they can reveal to the reader the structure of a novel or its parts, and thereby allow the reader to navigate; and they can play a role as generators of suspense. In regard to memory, evocative descriptions of place in literature offer a way to record the character of a place at a moment in time, to maintain something of a physical reality of a certain era. It has been argued that this focus on the historical aspect of places even distinguishes literary writers from architects: while architects may tend to have a fascination for the new, being concerned with future situations, literary writers describe the complexity of the existing, the nearly past, already disappearing world. In the words of Dutch architecture critic Gijs Wallis de Vries:

“The architect . . . draws the streets of the future and sees the city from a bird’s-eye perspective. His world comes. The world of the writer is today’s, and that world passes. He has the gaze of the pedestrian. . . . But precisely in this way he creates a world that remains”.⁷⁰

In *Species of Spaces*, Georges Perec notes almost in despair how writing indeed allows retaining a part of a fast changing world:

*Space melts like sand running through one’s fingers. Time bears it away and leaves me only shapeless shreds: . . . To write: to try meticulously to retain something, to cause something to survive; to wrest a few precise scraps from the void as it grows, to leave somewhere a furrow, a trace, a mark or a few signs.*⁷¹

In the novel *Austerlitz*, for instance, W.G. Sebald describes the memory of a number of places through the looking glass of the protagonist Austerlitz, who is being followed by the narrator on a journey through Europe, reconstructing the environments of his past.⁷² The places are described with the intensity of reviving memories. A similar effect takes place in the novel *Istanbul* by Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk.⁷³ Here, the memories of the narrator run parallel to his memories of the city of his childhood, Istanbul. The city is portrayed by detailed

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69 In his extensive volume on the presence of architectural descriptions in novels, Winfried Nerdinger sums up a number of functions that architectural descriptions can have in a novel: they can structure the course of events in a novel, guide the gaze of the reader, generate the social context of the narrative, and give expression to the characters, (op. cit. note 69, p.12). The Dutch writer Dirk van Weelden also addressed the ways in which architecture is used in literature, including the *illustrative* function of architecture and the *rethoric instrument of navigation*. Dirk van Weelden, “Steden in een baan om de aarde” [Cities in a course around the earth], in: Arjen Mulder, Dirk van Weelden (eds.), *Architectuur&Literatuur*, De Gids nr. 11, November 2004, p. 877

70 Freely translated after Gijs Wallis de Vries, ‘De literatuur in de architectuur’ [Literature in Architecture] in: Arjen Mulder, Dirk van Weelden (eds.), *Architectuur&Literatuur*, De Gids nr. 11, November 2004, p. 901

71 Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces*, Penguin Classics, London 2008, pp. 90-91 [Espèces d’ espace, Editions Galilée, Paris 1974]

72 W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, Carl Hansen Verlag, München 2001, (read: Dutch translation by Ria van Hengel: W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam 2003)

73 Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul. Memories and the city*, Knopf, New York 2005 [Original: *Istanbul. Hatıralar ve şehir*. İletisim Yayincılık, İstanbul 2003] read: translation in Dutch by Hanneke van der Heijden: Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul. Herinneringen en de stad*, De Arbeiderspers, Amsterdam/Antwerpen 2005

descriptions of places and activities taking place through the eyes of the child and the grown-up man. In *Remembrance of Lost Times* by Marcel Proust,⁷⁴ which will be discussed in more detail further in this chapter, descriptions of buildings and landscapes are used to construct a sense of the passage of time. A quite different role that evocative descriptions of places can play in amplifying the perceptions and emotions of the characters. In this context, Finnish geographer Pauli Tapani Karjalainen, who states that biography and geography are inextricably linked in literature,⁷⁵ refers to the novel *Urwind*, by Finnish writer and poet Bo Carpelan, which describes the life, thoughts and states of mind of the protagonist over the course of a year, mostly through describing spaces: the stairwell of an urban building, the sound of the wind in a courtyard, the steps of the protagonist in a city square.⁷⁶ The locations in the city of Helsinki are described in a recognizable way, while these descriptions derive undeniably from a personal experience. Sensory perceptions of the urban and architectural space are linked to a specific time or season, to memory and imagination. The descriptions of urban spaces in the works of Hungarian writers György Konrád and Péter Nádas are intensely internalized by their characters and it is precisely this that makes them so familiar.⁷⁷ The psychological effect of the corridors and rooms in a mental institution is intensely evoked in the descriptions of protagonist Deborah in *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*.⁷⁸ Another reason for a writer to choose specific architectural and urban environments in literature may be their symbolic function. In Harry Mulisch's Dutch epos *Discovery of Heaven*, the choice of places where events occur are carefully chosen. In this book the exceptionally intelligent boy Quinten follows his fascination for the spaces in Piranesi's drawings, which leads him to important places in the history of culture and religion – in which, ultimately, Quinten himself becomes an important actor. The strong symbolic meaning of the Pantheon in Rome is used to illustrate the critical point when Onno, Quinten's father, discovers his lost son in the crowd after a long period of separation. The black crow escaping through the hole in the roof of this building strengthens the symbolic power of this moment.

48 *As he crossed the threshold, the colossal empty space took his breath away. As the in the impenetrable interior of a crystal, the shadowless light hung on the blond marble floor, against the columns and alcoves and chapels, where the proud Roman gods had been replaced by humble Christian saints. The highest point of the cupola was occupied not by a keystone but by the blue sky, a round hole measuring almost thirty feet across, through which a diagonal beam of sunlight shone like an obelisk, producing a dazzling egg on a damaged fresco. The cupola with the hole in it reminded him of an iris with a pupil: the temple was an eye, which he was now inside. From outside, the hole must be black. The building was an observatory . . . at that moment the ebony-colored bird flew off the man's shoulder, described a*

74 Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Gallimard, Paris 1919, [Dutch translation *Op zoek naar de verloren tijd*, deel 1 *De kant van Swann*, De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam 2002 ; English edition: *Remembrance of Things Past*. Volume 1: Swann's Way: Within a Budding Grove, Vintage, New York,]

75 Pauli Tapani Karjalainen, 'On Geo-biography', in Virve Sarapik and Kadri Tüür (eds.), *The City -- Topias and Reflections* (conference book), *Koht ja Paik / Place and Location* III, Tallinn 2003, pp. 87-93

76 Bo Carpelan, *Urwind*, Helsinki, 1993, [English translation by David McDuff, Manchester 1996]

77 György Konrád, for example *A Feast in the Garden*, New York 1992 [1989]; Péter Nádas, *De levensloper, boek over een jaar*, Amsterdam 1997 [Évkönyv 87-88, Budapest 1989]

78 Hannah Green, *I never promised you a Rose Garden*, London 1964

*circle through the temple with wings flapping, sat for a moment on the ledge where the cupola rested on the rotunda, then flew up an disappeared croaking through the blue opening.*⁷⁹

The churches in Rome and the sacral spaces in Jerusalem are evidently connected to the theme of religion in this novel, just like the visit of the three secondary characters Onno, Max and Ada to Cuba is connected to political motives. Even though at first sight they merely serve as a background rather than play a leading role, the architectural and urban spaces in the novel are carefully chosen and evocatively described, and are inseparably related to the unfolding of events in the narrative.

In some cases, architecture is almost literally used to structure the literary work. This instrumental use of architecture occurs, for example, in the genre of the Gothic Novel, in which the typology of the castle organizes both structure and atmosphere of the novel.⁸⁰ In such novels, like *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Wallpole, the dark atmosphere of a Castle with its crypts and corridors serves as the perfect setting for mysterious crimes. Sometimes architecture is used as structural model for a whole book, while architectural spaces are also used as a "rhetoric instrument of navigation",⁸¹ to memorize the structure of the narrative. This principle of navigation by means of architecture is interestingly explained in the novel *In Babylon* by Dutch writer Marcel Möring, by protagonist Nathan who uses the tower of Babel to wander through his memories:

I walked into this tower, across the mountain of sand and rubble that reached to the third gallery. Because I had been stowing memories in the tower ever since I was a child, I had to go a long way up before I came to the section where I kept my stories. They lay, not only because I had stored them away at a later date, but because the spot appealed to me, in the innermost system of spiralling corridors. It was visible from the outside, like the fragile shell of a derelict building. What were they for, all those crypts and niches? Who needed those endless corridors that wound, tunnel-like, through the stone colossus? I did.

*I climbed from gallery to gallery, until I reached the place where the heart of the building pierced the sky. It was the seventh circle, on the right was a section in scaffolding, on the left, a steep stone incline that led to several portals. I went through the middle one and turned left. Darkness hung between the damp walls. A couple of workers were standing next to a pillar with a trough of mortar. I passed them and went right, deeper into the depths. An empty corridor, swathed in flickering torchlight lay before me . . . I hurried through the corridor, the dark curve with the red-lit walls. Our family portrait, the faces frozen in black and white. Zeno in Switzerland. In a room deep within the tower, the women of my life were sitting side by side.*⁸²

79 Harry Mulisch, *De ontdekking van de Hemel*, De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam 1999 (1992), pp. 712-713, English translation by Paul Vincent: Harry Mulisch, *The Discovery of Heaven*, Penguin books, New York 1997, pp. 578-579

80 Dirk van Weelden, 'Steden in een baan om de aarde' [cities in a course around the earth], in: Arjen Mulder, Dirk van Weelden (eds.), *Architectuur&Literatuur*, De Gids nr. 11, November 2004, p. 878

81 Ibidem, p. 877

82 Marcel Möring, *In Babylon*, Meulenhoff, Amsterdam 1997, p. 309-310, English translation by Stacey Knecht: *In Babylon*, HarperCollins, New York 2001, p. 270-271

Remarkably, in this fragment the tower is not a mere construction. By mentioning the men at work in the tower while Nathan traverses the space in search of his stories, the tower is evocatively described as an actual, lived space. Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* resembles such precedents: here, as well, the architectural specificity of the monastery is key to the entire narrative, which unfolds in the monastery within the limited time span of seven days. The novel is a genuine architectural novel, in its countless meticulous descriptions of space. Architecture is here presented as the divine art of proportion: "For architecture, among all the arts, is the one that most boldly tries to reproduce in its rhythm the order of the universe."⁸³

The narrative is punctuated with precise architectural descriptions, which help build up suspense: the reader memorizes architectural details that might offer clues to the crime: the height of the windows, the orientation of doors giving access to the main building of the abbey, secret corridors that might lead to the library, which is the most secretive and intriguing place in the monastery – and in the book. It is the architecture that renders the library's mystery, from its labyrinthine routing to its very details.

As we roamed, seeking the way, suddenly, in the center of one room, I felt an invisible hand stroke my cheek, while a groan, not human and not animal, echoed in both that room and the next, as if a ghost were wandering from one to the other. I should have been prepared for the library's surprises, but once again I was terrified and leaped backward. William . . . held up the light and looked around. He raised one hand, examined the flame . . . then moistened a finger and held it straight in front of him.

"It's clear," he said then, and showed me two points, on opposite walls, at a man's height. Two narrow slits opened there, and if you put your hand to them you could feel the cold air coming from outside. Putting your ear to them, you could hear a rustling sound, as of wind blowing outside.

50 *"The library must, of course, have a ventilation system," William said. "Otherwise the atmosphere would be stifling, especially in the summer. Moreover, those slits provide the right amount of humidity, so the parchments will not dry out. But the cleverness of the founders did not stop here. Placing the splits at certain angles, they made sure that on windy nights the gusts penetrating from these openings would encounter other gusts, and swirl inside the sequence of rooms, producing the sounds we have heard. Which . . . increase the fear of the foolhardy who come in here, as we have, without knowing the place well."⁸⁴*

Now that we have seen that architecture can play an important role in literature, a next step is to see how architectural descriptions come about. In the next paragraphs I will take a close look at the ways literary writers observe and describe spaces to the very detail, taking notice of the power of sensory experience, in which the relation between the perceiving subject and the object of perception is explored.

83 Umberto Eco, *Il nome della rosa*, Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri-Bompiani, Sonzogno, 1980; English translation *The Name of the rose*, Helen and Kurt Wolff/ Harcourt, New York, 1983, p.26

84 Umberto Eco, *Il nome della rosa*, Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri-Bompiani, Sonzogno, 1980; English translation *The Name of the rose*, Helen and Kurt Wolff/ Harcourt, New York, 1983, p.177

2.1.3 Close reading: observation and perception

To describe, one has to develop a capacity to observe. In the academic field of linguistics and literature, *close reading* is often used as a way to study a written source. By concentrating on details, by finely observing which formulations and directions are chosen in the studied text, one hopes to achieve a better understanding of the meaning of the text and of the author's intentions. Also on a spatial level, when considering specific sites, a close reading of details, patterns and layers of meaning could be possible. Indeed, in order to evocatively describe places in their novels, literary writers conduct a close reading of architectural and urban features. They need to closely observe details and materiality, and consider how sensory experiences of space are connected to feelings of intimacy, distance, fear, etcetera. Writers such as Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin are often mentioned as the *chroniqueurs* of the rise of the modern city and of modern life.⁸⁵ Rather than fiction, their writings are observations of urban life in the early twentieth-century metropolis, telling of the way the city is *lived*, the way the individual related to the masses in Baudelaire,⁸⁶ and of the way new types of spaces invoke new types of behaviour – in Walter Benjamin's Arcades project, for instance.⁸⁷ These writers have proven to be sharp readers of the modern age and its changing relation between man and the city: they have had a strong capacity to observe the spatial practices connected to the new urban life. To Bart Keunen, who investigated how the early modern metropolis has been depicted in literature, Benjamin's *flaneur* was "a wanderer, perceiving artistically, poeticising the world. . . . The artistic flaneur reads each selection out of the urban 'macrocosm' as an allegorical sign that refers to the 'microcosm' of psychological meanings."⁸⁸ Benjamin's poetic reading of the city contained many descriptions of material and behavioural details, as well as sensory experiences of urban space, such as sounds, smells and visual impressions. It is in these kinds of personal descriptions of the experience of space that individuality and universality merge: while the impressions are by definition the individual ones of the writer-observer, they evoke memories of similar experiences of the reader. Intriguing about Walter Benjamin's writings is that he did not depict the modernity of the twentieth-century metropolis as something cold and rational, but rather as a dream-world: depicting the sounds, the noises and the stories. Benjamin had the dreamlike view of a poet: "For Benjamin the metropolis is a dream-world, the intoxicating site of the phantasmagoric, the kaleidoscopic and the cacophonous."⁸⁹

85 See for example David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin*, MIT press, Cambridge, Mass. 1986

86 Most notably the collection of poems *Fleur du Mal* (1857) and collection of prose-poems *Spleen de Paris*, 1869. In English translation by Walter Martin: Charles Baudelaire *Complete poems*, Routledge, New York, 2002 [1997]

87 Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagenwerk*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1982 [1943-40]

88 Bart Keunen, *De Verbeelding van de Grootstad. Stads- en wereldbeelden in het proza van de moderniteit*, VUB Press, Gent University, Brussels 2000 [*The Imagination of the Metropolis. City- and Worldviews in the prose of modernity*], p. 43

89 Neil Leach, *Re-thinking Architecture, a reader in cultural theory*, Routledge, London / New York 2003 [1997], p.24

For Benjamin, the city seemed to trigger associations; every sign or detail could generate day-dreams, thoughts and reflections.⁹⁰

Like these *observers*, Italian novelist Italo Calvino has had a tremendous impact on architectural considerations about the modern city. Many of Calvino's essays and novels indeed show a capacity of close reading, on different levels: from the smallest detail to the scale of the city, from specific sensory experiences to human activities. While Baudelaire and Benjamin describe real places, however, Calvino allows fiction to play a much larger role in his spatial descriptions, continuously shifting between observation and imagination. In his best known book *The Invisible Cities*,⁹¹ Calvino describes the complexity of the city by isolating specific phenomena and exaggerating these in short stories about fictional cities. The city of Armilla,⁹² for example, seems to exist only of its water system, its description features pipes, drains and ceramic sanitary objects. The city of Tamara⁹³ is full of signs. The thick layer of billboards and advertisements seems to hide its real nature. The city of Ersilia⁹⁴ is described by the network of threads that reveal the connections between the inhabitants of the city: relationships of family, trade or politics. In other words, in this city, only the normally invisible social networks are visible. Altogether, the 55 short stories form more than a rich collection of fairytale-like comments on urban phenomena; they also provide an evocative description of the complexity of the city of Venice. When "close reading" the book *Invisible Cities* with students, some came to realize that:

"the city is not exposed as a unity but as a wide range of emotions, memories, secrets, histories and connections, that can be found in the reality around us. A gigantic exploded view where the 'parts' are taken out of the 'whole'. It is the Venice we experience . . . we walk through, a place where we love, a city that we dream. When we look under the surface we see the imaginary Venice, the invisible Venice, the poetic Venice".⁹⁵

In *The Hidden Dimension*, anthropologist Edward T. Hall points at literature as a key to understanding human perception. He states that "literature is . . . a source of data on man's use of his senses".⁹⁶ Indeed, literary writers need to use sensory "clues" to express how characters relate to their environment, or to the spatial setting of the book. Hall studied texts by among others Henri Thoreau, Kafka and Mark Twain for their perceptual clues, and indeed found

90 His fragmentary collection *Einbahnstraße* (One-Way Street) is a striking example of this associative way of reading the city. Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, Ernst Rowolt Verlag, Berlin 1928, read in Dutch: Walter Benjamin, *Eenrichtingsstraat*, Historische Uitgeverij, Groningen 1994

91 Italo Calvino, *Le Città Invisibili*, Italy 1972, English translation: *Invisible Cities*, University of Michigan Press 1974, read in Dutch: Italo Calvino, *De onzichtbare steden*, Atlas, Amsterdam/Antwerpen2007 [1981]

92 *Armilla*, subtle cities 3, in: Italo Calvino, *De onzichtbare steden*, Atlas, Amsterdam/Antwerpen2007 [1981], pp. 56-57

93 *Tamara*, the cities and the signs 1, in: Italo Calvino, *De onzichtbare steden*, Atlas, Amsterdam/Antwerpen2007 [1981], pp. 20-21

94 *Ersilia*, the cities and the encounters 4, in: Italo Calvino, *De onzichtbare steden*, Atlas, Amsterdam/Antwerpen2007 [1981], pp. 82-83

95 Jan van Ballegooijen, "Storytelling Surfaces", in: Havik, Van Ballegooijen et.al. (eds) *Beyond the surface. Architectural reflections of body and mind*, TU Delft 2009, p. 13

96 Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, Anchor book editions, New York 1990 [1966], chapter viii The language of space", p.91-101, quote p.100

that through detailed descriptions of the sensory experience of spaces, the degree of intimacy or distance was revealed. French writer Alain Robe-Grillet has used the description of visual perception as core instrument in his novels. The novel *Jealousy*, for instance, consists largely of meticulous descriptions of one single house. The size of rooms, the place of columns, the way the shadow changes during the day – everything is described in great detail. Instead of describing any thoughts or emotions, the author only notes what can be seen in space and, to a lesser extent, what can be heard in dialogue. In his introduction to a collection of Robe-Grillet's work, Roland Barthes states that by the consequent use of the technique of describing the visual appearance of spaces and things, the "novel becomes man's direct experience of what surrounds him".⁹⁷ The reader, along with the writer, takes on a humble perspective: "We no longer look at the world with the eyes of a confessor, a doctor, or of God himself . . . but with the eyes of a man walking in his city with no other horizon than the scene before him, no other power than that of his own eyes".⁹⁸

While Robe-Grillet made the optical perception his literary trademark, Italo Calvino undertook the experiment to write separate texts addressing separate senses. In the book *Under the Jaguar Sun*,⁹⁹ each short story concentrates on one particular sense, such as sound, smell or taste, to give a detailed description of a space. In one part, for example, the acoustic characteristics of an architectural space are described, as well as the sounds of activities taking place, thereby forming an evocative aural "picture" of the space. The space becomes "one big auricle, a visualized cacophony. The sound expends the space, the silence makes it shrink or even disappear", wrote one of the students who read the book in my course on architecture and literature.¹⁰⁰ In the novel *The Quiet Girl*, Danish writer Peter Høeg not only describes the sound

of architectural spaces, but also extends this to the urban level by presenting a character with extraordinary auditory capacities, able to orient himself in the city through sound: "Listen," he said. *There was no loud or distinct sound. It was an intricate curtain of muffled ringing tones. The city's church bells chiming the sun to rest. "The key they are tuned to becomes the tonic in a major or minor triad. An overtone, which is an octave plus a minor or a major third, varies along with the tonic. The city is a sound map. Grundtvig Church. Tuned in D. And above that, the F-sharp is heard just as strongly. The church has only one huge bell. Its chimes could never be confused with those of the Church of Our Savior. Each is unique in its own way. So if you talk on the phone at sunset, and listen beyond the voice and compensate for the flat sound picture, you get an impression of where the person on the other end is located on the sound map."*¹⁰¹

97 Roland Barthes, introduction to: *Jealousy / In the Labyrinth.. Two Novels by Robe-Grillet*, English translation by Richard Howard, Grove Press, New York, 1994 [1965], p.25 [*La Jalousie*, 1957; *Dans le Labyrinthe*, 1959]

98 Ibidem.

99 Original: Italo Calvino, *Sotto il sole giaguaro*, Milan, Garzanti, 1986, English translation as *Under the Jaguar Sun* by William Weaver, London: Vintage, 1993.

100 As noted by Jan van Ballegooijen, student City&literature master course in Delft, 2008, in his essay "Storytelling Surfaces", in: Havik, Van Ballegooijen et.al. (eds) *Beyond the surface. Architectural reflections of body and mind*, TU Delft 2009, p. 14

101 Peter Høeg, *Den stille pige*, Rosinante, Denmark 2006, English translation by Nadia Christensen: *The Quiet Girl*, Picador, New York 2009, p.39 [read in Dutch translation *Het stille meisje*, Meulenhoff, Amsterdam 2006, p. 47]

This fragment hints at the unique sounds each city bears. In this case, it is interesting how the writer uses sound to give clues about the whereabouts of characters: sound becomes a means to navigate through a city. German writer Patrick Süskind became legendary with his book *Das Parfum*, which is centred on a perfume maker with remarkably strong but dark powers to create irresistible perfumes.¹⁰² The power of smell in this book influences the behaviour of people in an entire city. On a smaller scale, smell is used in many spatial descriptions in literature to strengthen atmospheric descriptions – humid smells generating suspense or warm smells of kitchens evoking feelings of homecoming – or to cause protagonists to reflect on memories. Taste can have a similar effect of bringing back memories, as is famously demonstrated in the four-page long fragment in Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*, when the small Madeleine cake offered at tea suddenly takes the protagonist Marcel back to the village of his youth:

And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory – this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me it was me. . . .

54 *And as soon as I had recognized the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me . . . immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set to attach itself to the little pavilion opening on to the garden which had been built out behind it for my parents . . . and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the square where I used to be sent before lunch, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine . . .*¹⁰³

Here, it is one particular taste that generates associations of spatial settings: the old grey house, her room, a little pavilion, the town and its streets and square. The specific character of these spaces is evoked by the taste, even if the “madeleine” cake has no direct relation to space. The above-mentioned examples show that in literature, evocative descriptions of space are characterized by the attention given to detail, materiality and sensory perception. Drawing a parallel from such literary descriptions to architecture, we can begin to see the potential of description as an instrument, allowing observation, or close *reading*, of lived experience and sensory perception to play a role not only in describing urban and architectural spaces, but also in designing them. In the following paragraphs, the notions of sensory perception, lived experience and the poetics of space will be further discussed and related to theoretical sources regarding the lived experience of architecture.

102 Patrick Süskind, *Das Parfum. Die Geschichte eines Mörders*, Diogenes, 1985; English translation *Perfume: Story of a Murderer*, Penguin Books, London 2007

103 Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Gallimard, Paris 1919, [Dutch translation *Op zoek naar de verloren tijd*, deel 1 *De kant van Swann*, De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam 2002, p.88-91; fragment from the English edition: English translation by C.K.Scott Moncrieff, Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, Wordsworth Editions, 2006, pp. 48-51]

2.2 READING PLACES

2.2.1 Phenomenology of architecture

The theme of perception has figured in debates on architecture since the 1950s, as a criticism of the abstract character of modern architecture. In his book *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*, Mexican architect and writer Alberto Peréz-Gómez complains that modern architecture has come adrift from the physical reality of human perceptions.¹⁰⁴ He urges that more attention be paid to the poetic and perceptual aspects of architecture. He complains that modern architecture has moved away from the physical reality of human experience. This position, which seeks to renew the connection between architecture and sensory perception, can indeed be seen as an attempt to provide alternatives to the scientific approach that had become dominant in modern architectural thought. Likewise, Norwegian architect and author Christian Norberg-Schulz endeavoured to re-establish the relationship between man and place, and explicitly focuses on the human rootedness in place. In his book *Genius Loci* of 1979, Norberg-Schulz speaks of a crisis in architecture, as a result of what he calls “a loss of place” in architectural practice: “The concrete qualitative nature of places is ignored.”¹⁰⁵ He claims that with the arrival of the Modern Movement, the awareness of place has diminished. Though pioneers of this movement such as Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe may have addressed the importance of the environment for “meaningful dwelling”, Norberg-Schulz’s critique is that the generations after them merely followed the formal aspects of their architecture, reducing it to a style without its original content. According to Norberg-Schulz, architects were no longer aware of the specific character and requirements of places, of the site-specific qualities of light and of scale: “Most buildings exist in a nowhere; they are not related to landscape nor to a coherent, urban whole. The modern city is based on a confusion of scales.”¹⁰⁶ Embroidering on Heidegger’s ideas about the connection between *dwelling* and *being*,¹⁰⁷ Norberg-Schulz considered the direct living environment of people a basic notion in architecture, the main goal of which would be to create “an existential foothold”. As dwelling is always connected to a location, place is an essential part of lived experience. And architecture, according to Norberg-Schulz, is an important means with which to create meaningful places. Norberg-Schulz connects Heidegger’s thoughts on “being-in-the-world” to the idea of place as a bear-

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104 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, ‘Introduction to Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science’, in: K. Michael Hays, *Architecture Theory since 1968*. New York 1998, pp. 462-475.

105 Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci. Towards a phenomenology of Architecture*, Academy Editions, London, 1979, chapter vii Place Today

106 Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci. Towards a phenomenology of Architecture*, Academy Editions, London, 1979, chapter vii Place Today

107 The old-German word *Buan* denotes both “being” and “dwelling”, notes Heidegger: Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”, originally published as “Bauen, Wohnen, Denken” in 1951, in Neil Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture. A reader in cultural theory*. Routledge, London/New York, 2003 [1997]

er of identity. As Heidegger suggests, one can only exist if one is placed: to be is to be *there*, (Da-sein) in an embodied condition. Edward Casey, the contemporary philosopher of place agrees that: “To be at all – to exist in any way – is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. . . . Nothing we do is unplaced.” Casey explains how this understanding of being *placed* even dates back to Aristotle, as “Heidegger, for example, contends with Aristotle as to what being in a place signifies for ‘being-in-the-world’”.¹⁰⁸

The philosophical approach that phenomenology takes offers a possibility to address the importance of place-making as an existential task of architecture. In short, phenomenology is concerned with the question of how things appear to us:¹⁰⁹ it aims to understand lived experience and the relationship of man, body and world. The discourse on phenomenology finds its source in Edmund Husserl’s search for a philosophy concerned with perception of the world; he claimed that a scientific approach alone could not adequately question the real, and that another approach was necessary. Husserl regarded phenomenology as a “descriptive” philosophical approach, concerned with describing how things appear to human consciousness.¹¹⁰ French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty elaborated this view with his interest in space and its relation to the human body. His seminal work *The Phenomenology of Perception*, which discusses at length the role of the body in the perception of space, has become a key source for architects and theorists concerned with the experience of space. Drawing on earlier investigations by philosophers such as Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger about the relation between human, world and experience, Merleau-Ponty’s work gives a detailed account of embodied experience, addressing such issues as the spatiality of one’s body and the role of the senses in perception.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty fundamentally addresses sensory experience, explaining how perception depends on an intertwining of the various senses. In architecture, the way in which individuals perceive their spatial surroundings through the senses, the acoustic and tactile experience of materials, forms and spaces, does indeed play a crucial role. Key architectural notions such as distance, character and intimacy are measured not just with the eyes, but also with the entire body.¹¹¹ Especially since the 1960s, numerous authors have addressed the theme of architectural perception. Kevin Lynch and Gordon Cullen have greatly contributed to a better understanding of how visual perception relates to the way people move and orient themselves in urban environments. Kevin Lynch’s book *The Image of the City* approaches perception from the vantage point of environmental psychology. He

108 Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place. A Philosophical History*, University of California Press, Berkeley / Los Angeles / London, 1998 [1997], p.ix, original italics

109 In ancient Greek, φαίνομαι (*phainomai*) is the verb for *to appear*. A phenomenon, then, is that which appears to us.

110 Husserl stated “I attempt to guide, not to instruct, but merely to show and to describe what I see” as quoted in Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement, a historical introduction*, Kluwen Academic Publishers, Dordrecht 1994, p. 69

111 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge, New York 2005 [*Phénoménologie de la perception*. Gallimard, Paris 1945]. See also the introduction to the chapter ‘Perception’ in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Architectural Positions. Architecture, modernity and the Public Sphere*, Sun Publishers, Nijmegen, 2009, p. 113-117

shows that the perception of a city is determined by a combination of physical and symbolic elements, and that people create “mental maps” based on these elements that enable them to use their city.¹¹² Gordon Cullen depicts the experience of townscapes in sequences of sketches, showing the visual perception of the pedestrian when strolling through the complexity of urban spaces.¹¹³ In 1959, Danish writer Steen Eiler Rasmussen focused explicitly on the theme of sensory perception in his book *Experiencing Architecture*.¹¹⁴ He discussed, for example, the different sounds that characterize the identity of public spaces, made up by the sounds of footsteps on the street and the sounds of voices and activities. In the 1960s, Edward Hall studied the perception of social and personal space in various cultures in relation to the senses: he speaks of visual, auditory and olfactory space, next to thermal and tactile space, which are not so much seen, heard or smelled, but perceived with the skin.¹¹⁵ In the essay *The Eyes of the Skin*, Juhani Pallasmaa continued this line of thought, focusing especially on the possibilities of such a perceptual approach for architecture, stating that “every touching experience of architecture is multi-sensory; qualities of matter, space and scale are measured equally by the eye, ear, nose, skin, skeleton and muscle”.¹¹⁶

After sight, sound is probably the most general (as opposed to intimate, personal) sense to relate to architectural perception. In contemporary society, the role of sound in experiencing space may have lost some of its strength due to the abundance of visual stimuli in advertisements, screens and other devices in our image-oriented cities. Even though such visual stimuli are often combined with sound, in general these are dominated by the image. Sound as a factor in the experience of architecture has therefore been overshadowed by the hegemony of the visual. Indeed, architecture students get to know architectural projects mostly through images: in books, magazines, films and on lecture slides. However, sound remains an important factor in the experience of architecture. Architectural spaces are for a large part characterized by the way the materials they consist of reflect or absorb sound, as well as by the dimensions that define the distances through which sounds reflect and reverberate. The sound of footsteps in a large, stony building such as a church is different than that in an airport, even if the size is large as well. In the airport, sounds become diffuse because of the openness of space and the sequence of interconnected halls and corridors, while the ceiling and walls of the church are acoustically much more defined. Visually impaired people often navigate through the city through sound. The presence of a railroad or busy street, the whistling sound of leaves in trees, or the sounds of stronger winds close to high-rise buildings provide information about the location in the city, and help to find points of orientation. Cognitive mapping, as discussed by Kevin Lynch, can therefore reach much further than the image alone – sounds of the city also take part in our mental maps. Recently, the city of Tallinn was the scene of the festival “Tuned City”, in which “sonic landmarks” guided the pedestrian through the city

112 Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1960

113 Gordon Cullen, *The Concise Townscape*, The Architectural Press, Oxford, 1996 [1971]

114 Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture*. London 1959; reprint MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1993; Dutch edition: *Architectuur beleven*. Staatsuitgeverij, Den Haag 1983.

115 Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, Anchor book editions, New York 1990 [1966]

116 Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin. Architecture and the Senses*, Polemics series, Academy Editions, London 1996, p.28

of Tallinn.¹¹⁷ Through such art manifestations in which the relationship between space and sound are explored, the theme of “hearing” architecture is gaining attention.¹¹⁸ Also through publications on spatial acoustics and aural architecture, sound has reappeared in the debate on architecture by a number of architects, sound engineers and musicologists who investigate “aural” architecture, stating that it is not sound itself that has disappeared from space, but rather humans’ awareness of it.¹¹⁹

Smells and flavours may not seem such evident generators of architectural perception, but they play an important role in the experience of spaces. Many places and cities bear their own, characteristic smell. Thinking of the three largest Dutch cities, an olfactory distinction can easily be made: Rotterdam smells the most urban, of stone and dust and smoke from the harbour; Amsterdam, built on poles in the mud of the IJ water area, smells darker, around the canals one recognizes the humid smell of still water and brick buildings; in The Hague, the wind brings the salty smell of the sea, which intermingles with the smell of the linden trees in the many parks and public spaces and the stony smell of small streets.¹²⁰ Cities, landscapes and sites bear their own smells, whereas building materials and the interplay of light, materials and scale define olfactory characteristics as well: the stony, cold smell of cathedrals is fundamentally different than the smell of office buildings. Smells and flavours are strongly connected to memory. People who claim to have no memories of their early childhood environment, first recognize the smell when they return to that place after many years. Somehow, the body remembers smells and flavours of the infant years that the mind has long forgotten. As Juhani Pallasmaa says: “A particular smell makes us re-enter a space that has been completely erased from the retina memory; the nostrils awake a forgotten image, and we are enticed to enter a vivid daydream. The nose makes the eye remember.”¹²¹ A familiar smell may indeed suddenly evoke a picture in our mind of a long forgotten place. Sensory perceptions of places can thus generate associations with the past of the observer. Bloomer and Moore argue that the memory of architecture is strongly linked to embodied experience: “to at least some extent every place can be remembered, partly because it is unique, but partly because it has

117 *Tuned City* took place in Tallinn in May 2010, while a second edition will be held in 2011 in the context of Tallinn’s status as European Culture Capital in 2011. The first *Tuned City* event was held in Berlin, July 2008. Since then *Tuned City*, a group of sound artists, sound engineers and musicologists functions as an international platform “which proposes an examination of the relations between architecture and sound”. See <http://www.tunedcity.net>, accessed January 10, 2011

118 Recently, the Netherlands Architecture Institute NAI in Maastricht organised the symposium “An Inquiry into the Spatial, the Sonic and the Public. A report of this symposium appeared on the Dutch architecture website <http://www.archined.nl/nieuws/2011/engels/sound-and-space/>, accessed January 10, 2011

119 Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, for example, investigate the dimensions and functions of “aural spatiality”. Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, *Spaces Speak. Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture*. Cambridge, MA 2007; see also Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, “Aural Architecture: The Invisible Experience of Space”, and other contributions in the theme issue of *OASE*: Pnina Avidar, Raviv Granchrow, Julia Kursell (eds.), *OASE #78 IMMERSSED. Sound and Architecture*. NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2009, pp.50-63

120 Architecture & product design studio *qenep* in The Hague developed a perfume based on these scents for the exhibition *Wêreldstad aan Zee. Structuurvisie Den Haag 2020*, commissioned by the city planning department, City Hall, The Hague, 2006

121 Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin. Architecture and the Senses*, Polemics series, Academy Editions, London 1996, p. 38

affected our bodies and generated enough associations to hold it in our personal worlds.”¹²² Architecture, then, has the capacity to be both an object of recollection and a generator of a sociations through its very sensory perception.

For Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, this aspect of sensory perception plays a major role as his frame of reference, and as a core theme in his design practice. Describing boyhood memories of the specific materials, colours and odours of his aunt’s kitchen, Zumthor says: “Memories like these contain the deepest architectural experience that I know. They are reservoirs of the architectural atmospheres which I explore in my work as an architect.”¹²³ His approach to architecture transcends the mere visual, and addresses the acoustic and tactile experience of materials, forms and spaces. In Zumthor’s bathhouse in Vals, the sense of touch is ultimately evoked by the combinations of the surface of the water and the stone materialization of the walls enclosing the basins. His Bruder Claus chapel is first and foremost characterized by its strong smell, which is caused by the very process of the making of this building. For this chapel, Zumthor first built a “tipi”-shaped structure of rough wooden trunks. Afterwards, layers of concrete were added as an outer skin. After the concrete had dried out, the wooden inner structure was set on fire, leaving behind not only an extraordinary relief of charcoal in the inner walls, but also a strong scent of burnt wood, evoking an intense, maybe even sacral, experience. Elaborating on such memories of how details and materials evoke poetic experience, Zumthor uses architectural elements to provide intimacy and warmth in his designs, by subtly establishing a field of tension between opposites such as intimacy and distance, and interior and exterior:

“These thresholds, crossings, this tiny loop-hole door, the almost imperceptible transition between the inside and the outside, an incredible sense of place, an unbelievable feeling of concentration when we suddenly become aware of being enclosed, of something enveloping us, keeping us together, holding us.”¹²⁴

This “something” that Zumthor describes, embracing the visitor, is the architecture itself, which changes, as it were, from a passive object to an active subject. This interplay between subject and object is an important aspect of lived experience, which has been conceptualized by Merleau-Ponty in the notions *intertwining* and *chiasm*.¹²⁵ Both intertwining, the idea of weaving together, and chiasm, the idea of a crossing, refer to the dynamic interplay between the perceiving subject and the perceived object. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty describes how the body is at once “a thing amongst things”, thus an object that can be perceived, as well as that “what sees them and touches them”, in other words the perceiving

122 Kent C. Bloomer and Charles W. Moore, *Body, Memory and Architecture*, Yale University Press. New Haven, Conn. and London 1977, p. 107

123 Peter Zumthor, “A Way of Looking at Things”, in: *Architecture and Urbanism* (Tokyo), February 1998 (special issue), p. 6. See also the introduction to the chapter Perception, in *Architectural Positions. Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere*, Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (eds.), Sun Publishers, Nijmegen, 2009, p. 114

124 Ibidem.

125 “Chiasm/Intertwining” is the title of the chapter in Merleau-Ponty’s *The Visible and The Invisible*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1968

subject. The body, then “unites these two properties within itself, and its double belongingness to the order of the ‘object’ and the order of the ‘subject’ reveals to us quite unexpected relations between the two orders.”¹²⁶ For Merleau-Ponty, the body is thus not a passive object, nor only a perceiving subject. Rather, embodied perception implies that the body is simultaneously subject and object, it actively perceives and it is perceived by others, or even itself. The term “atmosphere” describes very well the intense relations between subject and object in regard to the experience of place. As Gernot Böhme argues: “Atmospheres are in fact characteristic manifestations of the co-presence of subject and object.”¹²⁷ Indeed, atmosphere is experienced personally, but it is produced by means of an “objective arrangement” of materials, spatial dimensions, light, sound and smell all play a part in the construction of atmosphere. For architects, this notion is of interest, since it is through architecture that such an arrangement can be produced. When Böhme suggests that an “aesthetics of atmosphere must . . . mediate between the aesthetics of reception and the aesthetics of production”,¹²⁸ this implies that architects have to bear in mind the way their spatial and material arrangements are *received*.

2.2.2 Lived experience of place

A number of authors in the field of geography and philosophy such as, among others, Yi-Fu Tuan, David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer, have continued to explore this phenomenological approach to architecture and the experience of place.¹²⁹ Robert Mugerauer connects phenomenological thought to the design of the built environment, discussing both the idea of inhabiting place in a Heideggerian sense, and the critical displacements proposed by deconstructivist thought, specifically by Derrida. For Mugerauer, the relation between “self-identity and *genius loci*”¹³⁰ is crucial in thinking about design. Though to some extent, he claims, place is already given, Mugerauer sees a task for architecture to explore this relationship between humans and place, as “urban and regional planning, design, and architecture . . . help establish and maintain the openings in which a new gathering together can occur and a new belonging of society, self, nature”.¹³¹ David Seamon reflects on behavioural aspects of place, by looking, for example, at social practices in urban environments. Yi-Fu Tuan questions what could be the role of architecture in making meaningful places, and concludes that architec-

126 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1968, p. 137

127 Gernot Böhme, “Atmosphere as an Aesthetic Concept”, in *Constructing Atmospheres*, Daidalos 68/1998, p. 114

128 Ibidem, p. 112

129 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place, the Perspective of Experience*, University of Minnesota Press, 2001 [1977]; David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer (eds), *Dwelling, Place and Environment :towards a phenomenology of person and world*, University of Michigan/Nijhoff 1985; David Seamon, *Dwelling, Seeing, and Designing. Toward a Phenomenological Ecology*, SUNY Press, New York, 1993; Robert Mugerauer, *Interpretations on Behalf of Place*, State University of New York Press, New York 1994

130 Robert Mugerauer, *Interpretations on Behalf of Place*, State University of New York Press, New York 1994, p.162

131 Ibidem, p.163

ture can make place explicit: “The built environment, like language, has the power to define and refine sensibility. It can sharpen and enlarge consciousness. Without architecture, feelings of space must remain diffuse and fleeting.”¹³²

As is argued by the voices above, the complexity of human experience of the built environment should be a main concern for professionals engaged in spatial design. However, the complexity of such experience is seldom fully taken into account in designs by architects, who are often taught to think in conceptual models. When spatial design is limited to mere conceptual reflection or abstraction, it risks failing to address the richness and complexity of human experience of space.¹³³ Like in literature, spatial experience in reality is characterized by both individual experience *and* a collective consciousness, by the actual physical encounter *and* the memories, associations and thoughts that this encounter generates. In other words, our account of space continuously moves between different dimensions: a physical one, an abstract, conceptual one, and a more hidden dimension which is related precisely to these memories, associations and thoughts – those aspects that are difficult to measure and to generalize. Therefore, we should search for ways to think about, and to address in design, the complexity of architectural experience, and specifically the way space is experienced, remembered and “lived” by people.

By introducing the notion of *lived* space next to those of *conceived* and *perceived* space, in his theory about social space, French theorist Henri Lefebvre provided a valuable theoretical model. While professional disciplines engaged with spatial design often use a highly abstract, conceptual understanding of space, named conceived space by Lefebvre, he states that space is also physically perceived: the space has a physical dimension, which can be touched, seen, heard and even smelled. The third way of understanding space that Lefebvre discusses is to study spaces as they are *lived*, in other words, to question what role spaces play in the lives of their users and inhabitants, how space features in their thoughts, minds and memories. “The user’s space is *lived* – not represented (or conceived). When compared with the conceptual space of the experts (architects, urbanists, planners), the space of the everyday activities of users is a concrete one, which is to say, subjective.”¹³⁴ It is this aspect of space that Lefebvre claims is underestimated by planners in the ‘production’ of space: “conceived space is the dominant space in any society (or mode of production). . . . [lived space] is the dominated . . . space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate.”¹³⁵ In Lefebvre’s view, social space is a complex, relational space, in which the three before mentioned notions are seen as interconnected realms. Conceived, perceived and lived exist in what he calls a dialectical

132 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and place – the perspective of experience*, University of Minnesota press, Minneapolis 1977, p. 15, p. 107

133 As the *OASE* editors argued in their issue on phenomenology: “...if architecture bases itself on such a limited experience, this will lead to spatial environments incapable ... of offering human life a place worthy of its depth.” Marc Glaudemans, “Editorial. The visible and the Invisible”, *OASE #58, The Visible and the Invisible*, SUN publishers, Nijmegen, 2002, p. 7

134 Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space*, Blackwell Publishing, London, 1991 [*La Production d’espace*, Editions Anthropos, Paris 1974], p. 362

135 Ibidem, pp. 38-39

relationship: the three notions are interconnected, and all three are important if we want to understand the richness and complexity of space. However, unlike conceived and perceived space, which can be measured or drawn, *lived* space is less easy to define. Lefebvre claims that it is difficult to theorize such lived experience: indeed, once theorized, it is no longer directly lived. In lived space, the blurring boundaries between the subjective and the objective, the individual and the collective, the reality of physical experience and the fiction of imagination and memory, make it extremely difficult to measure and theorize. In that respect, Finnish architect and writer Juhani Pallasmaa might be right when he states in his essay “Lived Space” that, “measured by the criteria of Western empirical science, lived space can be seen as “fundamentally ‘unscientific’”.¹³⁶ Still, it is necessary to develop appropriate ways to understand what lived space means to make this aspect of space operational in architectural and urban practice – precisely because lived space is, as Pallasmaa argues, “both the object and the context of the making of art as well as architecture”.¹³⁷

In these writings, to a large extent informed by phenomenological thought, the question of the identity of place is often mentioned. An interesting approach to address this topic has been formulated as “topo-analysis”. Gaston Bachelard introduces the term as a field of research, connecting the poetic imagination to the physical reality of place. He describes topo-analysis as “the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives”.¹³⁸ Philosopher Edward S. Casey argues, that: “Less a method than an attitude, topo-analysis focuses on the placial properties of certain images.”¹³⁹ Interestingly, the notion of topo-analysis does not explicitly refer to one single discipline. On the contrary: it connects to philosophy and geography, as well as to the design disciplines and literature. Finnish geographer Paivi Kymäläinen distinguishes three overlapping directions of topo-analysis, which she calls “geographies in writing”. The first is a “realistic approach”, which collects knowledge about places by “locating, describing, observing, measuring, evidencing, perceiving, or representing”.¹⁴⁰ The second approach is about ordering places by categorizing and finding hierarchies, differences and oppositions. The third approach is defined by Kymäläinen as a “humanistic effort to create places of the human beings. In humanistic geography, place is most of all experienced and sensed by the signifying subject.”¹⁴¹ The three approaches to writing place can be interpreted as operational writing practices connected to Lefebvres three notions of space: the perceived space – Kymäläinen’s realistic approach; conceived space – the more conceptual way of ordering and categorizing; and lived space – focusing on the experience of the signifying subject. All three approaches to writing place are of interest if we intend to use writing as a tool to

136 Juhani Pallasmaa, *Lived Space. Embodied Experience and Sensory Thought*, in: Juhani Pallasmaa, Peter MacKeith (editor) *Encounters. Architectural Essays*, Rakennustietot Oy, Helsinki, 2005, p. 129

137 Juhani Pallasmaa, *Embodied experience and sensory thought*, in: Oase #58 *The Visible and the Invisible*, SUN publishers, Nijmegen, 2002, p.19

138 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1994 [*La Poétique de l’Espace*, Presses Universitaire de France, 1964] p. 8

139 Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place – a philosophical history*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1997, p. 288

140 Päivi Kymäläinen, *Geographies in Writing. Re-imagining Place*, Nordia Geographical Publications, Oulu, 2005, p. 183

141 Ibidem, p.184

engage lived space in architectural research and design. If writing can indeed be an operational concept in topo-analysis, through evocative description it can be extended from analysing place to the making of place: to the very practice of architecture.

Rather than relying on “objective” measurements and facts, literary description allows us to express the connection between people and the world they live in. As Yi-Fu Tuan puts it: “A geographer speaks as though his knowledge of space and place were derived exclusively from books, maps, aerial photographs and structured field surveys. . . . He and the architect-planner tend to assume familiarity – the fact that we are oriented in space and at home in place – rather than describe and try to understand what *being-in-the-world* is truly like.”¹⁴²

Indeed, by means of close observation and description one can come close to understanding what lived experience might entail. Lefebvre states that lived space is “the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’, but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who *describe* . . .”¹⁴³ Also Merleau-Ponty Merleau-Ponty speaks of a “demand for a pure description”.¹⁴⁴ He suggests that the real should be *described*, not analysed or explained.¹⁴⁵ He writes that phenomenology “offers an account of space, time and the world as we ‘live’ them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is . . .”¹⁴⁶ In his ‘phenomenological method’, *describing* is a first and important step towards the understanding of the relation between man, body and world. A description, that is, of the way things appear to us, of the embodied experience itself. Description, then, becomes a means for architects to reach a sensitivity towards perceptual aspects of their work – they could make use of descriptive methods to evoke sensory experiences, memories, associations and suspense. In that sense, architects can learn from the capacity of literary writers to observe and evocatively describe places. In her autobiography, the “grand dame” of Dutch literature Hella S. Haasse writes how she is driven to observe this lived experience of the world, looking at people, at their practices, emphatically imagining their stories:

To be possessed by a never ending astonishment about the world, as things are, by curiosity about the being of people, about the background of their thoughts, the motives of their acts.

*For me, perception is as much an urge as the desire to describe. To walk the street, to sit in a tram or train, to enter a department store, or a cafeteria or a cinema, and to look at the others with never fading attention, listen to their conversations, memorize their looks and their behaviour. The people are both more common and more peculiar than they seem at first sight. Always a new, unique self, an irreplaceable individual, centre of a world-view that might at some places coincide with mine, but that, as a whole, will forever remain unrecognizable for me. The miracle of this world, simultaneously being split a million times and being a whole, takes my breath away.*¹⁴⁷

142 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place. The perspective of experience*. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 1977, p.200

143 Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space*, Blackwell Publishing, London, 1991 [*La Production d’espace*, Editions Anthropos, Paris 1974], p. 39, original italics

144 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge, New York, 2005 [1945], p x(introduction)

145 Ibidem, p ix (introduction)

146 Ibidem, p vii (introduction)

147 Hella S. Haasse, *Het dieptelood van de herinnering*, Querido, Amsterdam, 2004 [2003/1954 *Zelfportret als legkaart*], p. 68 , translation KMH. This autobiography has not yet been published English.

Two themes that Haasse mentions in this fragment are of great importance for those who study lived experience: the interest in human perception and the tension between collectiveness and individuality of lived experience. Haasse's attentiveness to the world around her can be understood as a phenomenological approach. In this context, the work of Marcel Proust is also particularly interesting. The earlier mentioned fragment indeed accurately expressed the connection between taste (the *madeleine* cake) and the memory of childhood spaces and places. Also in a wider sense, Proust's literary descriptions incorporate a number of phenomenological notions, such as sense, sensation, essence and transcendence. For phenomenologists, Proust must have been an ideal writer, making much use of sensory perception in his descriptions and often relating such sensory experience to memory. Like Hella Haasse in the fragment above, Proust's character Marcel also reflects upon the urge to perceive. The protagonist Marcel, in this fragment still a young boy hoping to someday become a famous writer, gets caught by his perceptions:

Then, quite apart from all these literary preoccupations, and without definite attachment to anything, suddenly a roof, a gleam of sunlight reflected from a stone, the smell of a road would make me stop still, to enjoy the special pleasure that each of them gave me, and also because they appeared to be concealing, beneath what my eyes could see, something which they invited me to approach and seize from them, but which, despite all my efforts, I never managed to discover. As I felt that the mysterious object was to be found in them, I would stand there in front of them, motionless, gazing, breathing, endeavouring to penetrate with my mind beyond the thing seen or smelt.

64 *And if I had then to hasten after my grandfather, to proceed on my way, I would still seek to recover my sense of them by closing my eyes; I would concentrate on recalling exactly the line of the roof, the colour of the stone, which, without my being able to understand why, had seemed to me to be teeming, ready to open, to yield up to me the secret treasure of which they were themselves no more than the outer coverings.* ¹⁴⁸

Remarkably, Merleau-Ponty refers to Proust and a number of other writers and painters in the preface of *Phenomenology of Perception*, stating that phenomenology “is as painstaking as the works of Balzac, Proust, Valéry and Cézanne – by reason of the same kind of attentiveness and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the same will to seize the meaning of the world or of history as that meaning come into being.”¹⁴⁹ It is indeed possible to draw a parallel between the observational qualities of the artistic disciplines and the phenomenological attitude to be attentive towards the smallest details of our experience. In the next paragraphs I will specify this “kind of attentiveness and wonder” in the evocative spatial descriptions of poets.

148 Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Gallimard, Paris 1919, [Dutch translation *Op zoek naar de verloren tijd*, deel 1 *De kant van Swann*, De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam 2002, p. 213 English translation by C.K.Scott Moncrieff, Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, Wordsworth Editions, 2006 p.182

149 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge, New York, 2005, p. xxiv (preface). Certainly, many other writers and artists could have been mentioned here. The choice of these French examples most likely results from the predominantly French cultural environment of Merleau-Ponty.

2.2.3 Poetic receptivity

Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's demand for a “pure description” can be seen as an imperative to look at the world with such attentiveness and wonder, which allows the writer to see the world without prejudice, before reflection. Children, not yet as much influenced by intellectual reflection as adults, have this ability to immediately experience, as do writers and poets. Human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan explicitly mentions the fact that most adults have lost the capacity “to recapture the mood of their own childhood world”. Tuan suggests that poets sometimes manage to capture moments of such innocence and openness of experience: “Their words recall for us a lost innocence and lost dread, an immediacy of experience that had not yet suffered (or benefited) from the distancing of reflective thought.”¹⁵⁰ The ability of poets to perceive “before reflection” should therefore not at all be understood as a lack of intellect. On the contrary, the capacity to see even already known things as if anew, to allow for creative association and to make these associations operational in artistic work should not be underestimated. One has to know before one can allow oneself to forget knowledge, one has to be mature to allow oneself to use the gaze of the child. As Gaston Bachelard states, “knowing must . . . be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget knowing. Not-knowing is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge.”¹⁵¹ Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (or rather his heteronym Alberto Caeiro¹⁵²) explained:

*It is essential to know how to see
To know how to see without thinking
To know how to see when one sees
And not to think when one sees
Nor to see when one thinks
But that (poor us, who dress our soul in clothes!),
That requires a deep study
Requires a learning to unlearn* ¹⁵³

150 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place – the perspective of experience*, University of Minnesota press, Minneapolis 1977, p.20

151 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston Mass 1994 p. xxxiii, referring to Jean Lescure, *Lapique* [La poétique d'espace, Paris 1958]

152 Fernando Pessoa developed a fascinating form of authorship, by writing from different inner characters, the most important of which were Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis and Alvaro de Campos. Pessoa called Caeiro the “master” of all his heteronyms (including Pessoa himself). Although Caeiro's poetry was less intellectual and less lyrical than the work of Pessoa's other heteronyms, Caeiro, conceived by Pessoa as a pagan farmers son, had the purest, most phenomenological gaze. Much has been written about Pessoa's heteronyms, my main source has been August Willemse's extensive reflection *Fernando Pessoa, waarheid veinzen om niet niets te zijn* in: August Willemse, *Fernando Pessoa, gedichten*, De Arbeiderspers Amsterdam/Antwerpen 2001 [1978], pp.221-254

153 Fernando Pessoa, From the Portuguese-Dutch collection: August Willemse, *Fernando Pessoa, gedichten*, De Arbeiderspers Amsterdam/Antwerpen 2001 [1978], pp. 94-95, translation KMH

This capacity of the poet to observe everything as if anew, with attentiveness and wonder, can indeed be seen as the precondition for a phenomenological approach. In this way, Merleau-Ponty's notion of "pure" description, without the interference of intellectual reflection, can be understood as an encouragement to re-learn to see the world without prejudice. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard argues that phenomenology is the only academic area that can address the complexity of the poetic imagination, that is "a study of the phenomenon of the poetic image when it emerges in the consciousness as a direct product of the heart, soul and being of man, apprehended in his actuality."¹⁵⁴ Echoing the words of Dutch phenomenologist J.H. van den Berg, Bachelard states that: "poets are born phenomenologists, noting that things 'speak' to them."¹⁵⁵ Indeed, like Marcel Proust's character Marcel in *Remembrance of Things Past*, poets have the phenomenological urge to search for the essence within the image, within the smell, within sensory perception. Fernando Pessoa clearly demonstrates such a phenomenological gaze, stressing the importance of embodied experience:

. . . *I think with my eyes and ears
and with my hands and feet
and with my nose and mouth*

*To think a flower is to see it and smell it
And to eat a fruit is to taste its meaning.*¹⁵⁶

66 Poetry, though addressing existential themes of life, often starts from the simplest daily observations. Colours, smells, shapes, weather conditions, light and shadow trigger associations with the complexity of human emotions. According to South American writer Jorge Luis Borges, poetry can hide everywhere: ". . . and life is, I am sure, made of poetry. Poetry is not alien, poetry is lurking around the corner. It may spring on us at any moment."¹⁵⁷ Indeed, many seemingly meaningless details, often connected to buildings and places, may generate associations of great emotional importance. The question is, then, how to recognize such observations and connected associations as meaningful, and how to find the words expressing such meaningful connections. To be able to experience such poetic moments, as Bachelard calls them, one should develop a kind of receptivity. Dutch poet Rutger Kopland called for

154 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1994 [*La Poétique de l'Espace*, Presses Universitaire de France, 1964] pp. xviii

155 The Dutch psychologist J.H. van den Berg introduced a phenomenological approach in Dutch psychology, addressing the way people perceive their spatial environment. An interesting introduction to his views on distance, verticality and other spatial notions is J.H van den Berg, *De Dingen. 4 metabletische overpeinzingen*, Callenbach, Nijkerk 1966 (in Dutch). His work has been published in English by Springfield publishers, Illinois in 1955. Bachelard quotes his remark that "poets are born phenomenologists", in: Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1994 [*La Poétique de l'Espace*, Presses Universitaire de France, 1964] pp. xxviii.

156 Alberto Caeiro (Fernando Pessoa), Poems of Fernando Pessoa, poem *O Guardador de Rebanhos*, Poemas de Alberto Caeiro, vol III, Obras completas de Fernando Pessoa, Lisbon 1963, translated by Edwin Honig, Susan M. Brown, City Lights Books, 1998 [1986], p.17-18

157 Jorge Luis Borges, from the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1967-68, in: Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass., 2000

such a receptivity, which allows the poet to discover unexpected connections: "Like receiving an answer to an un-posed question, like experiencing a connection of which you were not yet aware that you knew it existed – and not only that. It is like, at the same time, reality could unveil more of its secrets, as if it has new connections already there for you."¹⁵⁸

In his view, receptivity is a precondition for invention, which is true for the poet as well as for the scientist: "This is what the scientist and the poet share, this ability to have an aesthetic experience, when the 'I' disappears for a moment in favor of the 'it'."¹⁵⁹ Such receptivity coincides with the before mentioned phenomenological approach of observing without prejudice, of "noting how things speak".

After the problem of "receiving" the poetic image, which requires a certain openness, the next question is how the other, the reader, can understand the poetic description of such an immediate experience. As Bachelard wonders: "How can this singular, short-issued event constituted by the appearance of an unusual poetic image, react on other minds and other hearts, despite all barriers of common sense, all the disciplined schools of thought, content in their immobility?"¹⁶⁰ Each reader of poetry is familiar with the awkward experience of recognizing fragments of poems, as if they were written especially for that unique reader. Somehow, the poem, written by someone living a different life, in a different place and time, seems to express precisely the state of mind of the reader. In this context, Bachelard speaks of *reverberation*:

"In the resonance we hear the poem, in the reverberations we speak it, it is our own. The reverberations bring about a change of being. It is as though the poet's being were our own being. . . . The image offered us by reading the poem now really becomes our own. It takes root in us. It has been given us by another, but we begin to have the impression that we could have created it, that we should have created it."¹⁶¹

This recognition is of a phenomenological nature, explains Bachelard. The poet's description is so vivid that it immediately causes an image to form in the reader's mind: an image, that is, before reflection. Only after this first instant, this poetic image then connects to individual experiences and memories of the reader; it resonates, as it were, in the life of the reader. In their work, poets can thus formulate a spatial experience that is on the one hand highly individual, while on the other, through reverberation, it obtains collective meaning. In other words, the subjective experience of the individual can be understood by others and also have meaning for others. As Yi-Fu Tuan puts it: ". . . even an experience that appears to be the product of unique circumstances can be shared."¹⁶² The possibility to pass on individual experiences to

158 Rutger Kopland, *Het mechaniek van de ontroering*, Van Oorschot publishers, Amsterdam 1995 pp. 29-30, original in Dutch, translation KMH

159 Rutger Kopland, *ibid.*

160 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1994 [*La Poétique de l'Espace*, Presses Universitaire de France, 1964] pp. xviii-xix

161 *Ibidem* p. xxii-xxiii

162 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place – the perspective of experience*, University of Minnesota press, Minneapolis 1977, p. 147

others can be called *transsubjectivity*.¹⁶³ Through the impression of being personally involved with the poem, the reader in a way participates, by “living the poems we read”.¹⁶⁴

The poetic image, states Bachelard, is unusual, yet it takes root in both writer and reader.¹⁶⁵ It is thus communicable. Architectural spaces can also have this quality. My first encounter with the unusual shapes and shadows of Le Corbusier’s Ronchamps evoked such a reverberation. Coming from the road through the village, at the feet of the Vogezen mountains, entering the chapel is an introduction to another world, a world of darkness, light and silence. Mysterious beams of light touch the rough walls and the slightly inclined floor like those in a cave. Three towers, massive-looking from the outside, appear to be coloured niches, eating the sunlight from the sky differently each at time of the day. The architecture is simultaneously simple and complex. What seems clear to us at first sight, turns out to be slightly different at the next view. The South wall seems solid and load-bearing, until we discover the strip of light between wall and roof, and realize that the actual construction is built up of columns hidden in the wall. In the architecture of the chapel, aspects of perception coincide with functional demands and the genius loci, the identity of place. It offers a stratified spiritual landscape, from a distance and at a closer look, in form and material, in light and movement. The chapel is a thing that speaks to us, touching not only the physical landscape, but also the inner landscape of its visitor.¹⁶⁶ Le Corbusier’s chapel has the transsubjective quality of the poetic image. It takes root in us, and its reverberations can be found in many other architectural spaces.

68 When it comes to describing spaces, poets have a highly developed sense for “lived” space. Their descriptions of architectural space are vivid and detailed, sometimes to the extent that even objects are allocated human characteristics: houses embrace, comfort or shiver, attics groan and basements hide. Meticulously, Bachelard discusses such poetic images connected to the intimate spaces of the house. Indeed, many examples can be given of poetry featuring houses and details of houses. The before mentioned Dutch poet Rutger Kopland usually stays close to his home, describing the atmospheres of the rooms of his house and its near environment:

*The night in which the things again
become shadows of themselves,
the room smells again like clean sheets,
aged wood and lavender,*

163 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1994 [*La Poétique de l’Espace*, Presses Universitaire de France, 1964] p. xix

164 Ibidem, p. xxvii

165 The interactivity between writer and reader, specifically the role of the reader as a co-producer of the text, will be discussed in the chapter Transcription, part 3.1.3 “Writing another version: the role of the reader”.

166 I originally wrote this description of Ronchamps for the educational reader: Sien van Dam, Michiel Riedijk, Jaap Dawson et al. (eds). *Plandocumentatie kleine publieke gebouwen. (Project documentation Small Public Buildings)* TU Delft Faculty of Architecture, Delft University Press 2007

*in which the deadly silent window breathes again
with sleeping crowns in the wind*¹⁶⁷

While the intimate private space is the poetic space that Bachelard mostly refers to, landscapes and cities may also evoke such poetic images. In the work of Dutch poet Hans Lodeizen the spaces of the city often feature, who in some poems sees

*the city as a breathing animal
giving light and being dark*¹⁶⁸

For architects and planners concerned with the city, a poetic gaze can help to understand the lived experience of urban places, as poetry addresses one of architecture’s fundamental ambiguities: the interplay between the object and the subject. The object (a place, an object, an architectural detail) almost becomes a subject when it is able, through a smell, a sound or an unlikely image, to move people emotionally. As Bachelard states: “At the level of the poetic image, the duality of subject and object is iridescent, shimmering, unceasingly active in its inversions.”¹⁶⁹ Developing the skill of receptivity would greatly help architects to understand the relation between people and place, and to imagine how their designs will influence aspects of lived experience. Then, the receptivity of the poet could be a quality, which can be extended to urban and architectural analysis and practice. Like the reader who lives the poem he reads, an architect could read and *live* the places he studies, noting how they speak, as it were. Evocative description could take place in different phases of a design project, first in the phase of site analysis, or rather “topo-analysis”, focusing on revealing the characteristics that constitute the very specificity of place. Then, by evocatively describing the associations, or poetic images, as Bachelard would say, deriving from such a reading, fragments of atmospheres can already begin to emerge, and sparks of architectural details come to light. In a later stage of design, when the project as a whole reaches more clarity, it is through evocative description that its perceptual qualities can be expressed – whether in text or in drawing.

69

167 Original in Dutch: *De nacht waarop de dingen weer schaduwen/worden van zichzelf./de kamer weer ruikt naar schone lakens./oud hout en lavendel./waarop het doodstille raam weer ademt/met slapende kruinen in de wind*. Rutger Kopland, *Dankzij de dingen [Thanks to things]*, G.A.van Oorscot, Amsterdam 2000 [1989], p. 34 [translation kh].

168 Original in Dutch:.. *En zie de stad als een ademhalend dier / lichtgeven en donker zijn*, Fragment of poem of Hans Lodeizen, originally from the collection *Het innerlijk behang* (1944-1948), in: Hans Lodeizen, *Verzamelde gedichten*, Van Oorscot Publishers, Amsterdam 1997, p. 19 [translation kh].

169 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1994 [*La Poétique de l’Espace*, Presses Universitaire de France, 1964] p. xix

2.3 ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

2.3.1 Architectural descriptions: Steven Holl

In the 1990s, architects Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa and Alberto Pérez Gomez together wrote the book *Questions of Perception*, in which they presented their phenomenological inspiration to an audience of architects.¹⁷⁰ In the view of American architect Steven Holl, sensory perception is the core of the work of an architect:

“Architecture, more fully than other art forms, engages our sensory perceptions. The passage of time; light, shadow and transparency; color phenomena, texture, material and detail all participate in the complex experience of architecture. . . . Only architecture can simultaneously awaken all the senses – all the complexities of perception.”¹⁷¹

Steven Holl’s design approach, a “hybrid mode between a conceptual framework and a phenomenological approach”,¹⁷² can be regarded as an example of what I called evocative description. Following Merleau-Ponty, Holl states that: “Space is only perceived when a subject *describes* it.”¹⁷³ Drawing on phenomenological themes such as bodily experience, intertwining and chiasmatic relations in both his written and architectural work, his buildings reveal a sensitivity for light, materiality, and place in an evocative way.

70 In his work, Steven Holl pairs his attention to questions of perception with an awareness of place. His books *Intertwining* and *Anchoring*, both reflecting on his architectural work, can be seen as the two pillars on which his approach is constructed. *Anchoring*, written around 1987, was Holl’s

“... first manifesto about the connection of architecture, site, phenomena, idea, history. It was an operational philosophy; it did not try to find recipes, but to embrace the unpredictable, in the sense that we are always given a new site and situation, and we have to operate according to the conditions there.”¹⁷⁴

Anchoring, as the title already suggests, discusses the intention to ground a work of architecture to its place. Even though the work of architects today is less bound to one place or region, and some architects, including Holl, receive commissions world-wide, Holl states that such anchoring is all the more important: “anchoring architecture to the history of the site . . . The challenge of extremely diverse lands, cultures, climates, and their urban or suburban condi-

170 Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa, Alberto Pérez-Gomez, *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture*, *A+U* July 1994 (special issue)

171 Steven Holl, in: *ibidem*, p. 41

172 Holl characterizes his own approach in Alejandro de Zaera-Polo, *A conversation with Steven Holl*, in: *Steven Holl, 1986-1996*, El Croquis, Madrid, 1996, p. 11

173 Steven Holl, *Parallax*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2000, p. 13.

174 *Steven Holl, 1986-1996*, El Croquis, Madrid, 1996, p.11

tions sets still new obligations for anchored architecture.”¹⁷⁵ However, anchoring implies more than attaching a building to a mere site. Place has a much wider connotation than site or location. Place entails a more experiential understanding of human environment. Philosopher Edward S. Casey has highlighted the role of place in philosophical history, explaining how at some point “place” made way for “space” in Western thought, and arguing for a renewed position of place in contemporary philosophy. In *The Fate of Place* Edward S. Casey explains how, though site (or location) in itself is not necessarily embodied:

“The more we reflect on place . . . the more we recognize it to be something not merely characterizable but actually experienced in qualitative terms. There terms, for example, color, texture, and depth, are known to us only in and by the body that enters and occupies a given place . . . there can be no being-in-place except by being in a densely qualified place in concrete embodiment. Indeed, how can one be *in* place except for *through* one’s own body?”¹⁷⁶

Holl follows this line of thought, and connects place to body: “The body is the very essence of our being and our spatial perceptions.”¹⁷⁷ Thus, Holl’s interest in place is not necessarily based on a different theoretical discourse than his idea of intertwining. On the contrary, both notions are deeply informed by phenomenological thought, in which the embodied experience of place is one of the central notions. In Steven Holl’s design approach, the analysis of the site therefore entails much more than closely studying a map or making a survey of spatial characteristics. Holl tries to understand what a place means to users and inhabitants; to trace layers of history; to find stories and studies of the past; to experience the atmosphere; to look at it from various perspectives using various senses. In other words: Holl starts out to live place, before designing it. The actual design decisions in this process are, in some cases, long postponed, until the place becomes lived, until the architect is so familiar with it that the place becomes his own. To use a metaphor frequently brought up by Bachelard and Pallasmaa: the architect starts to “inhabit” the place as much as the place lives in the body and mind of the architect. Only then do Holl’s powerful conceptual figures appear, showing the first but essential moves towards the anchorage of new architecture to existing, lived place. And not only that, the anchoring of the design is also meant to develop a new condition, a dialogue between place and architecture: “When an architectonic work is successfully connected to the situation, a so called ‘third condition’ will develop. This condition is joined with expression and idea of situation.”¹⁷⁸ This extended and delayed topo-analysis is carried out with a similar awareness for detail and atmosphere, as we have found in the evocative descriptions of the literary writers mentioned earlier in this chapter.

In his book *Intertwining* Steven Holl explains how material phenomena, texture, light and shadow but also aspects of near and far are all intricately connected “in an intertwining

175 Steven Holl, *Intertwining. Selected projects 1989-1995*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2007 [1996], p.7

176 Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place. A Philosophical History*, University of California Press, Berkeley / Los Angeles / London, 1998 [1997], p.202, underlining kh

177 Steven Holl, *Parallax*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2000, p. 13.

178 Steven Holl, *Anchoring*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1989, p.9

continuum”.¹⁷⁹ This intertwining continuum is primarily experienced by the body. From Merleau-Ponty, we learned that the world is perceived by the whole of the body, that every fragment of sensory perception is linked to other ones. And not only our sensory experiences are intertwined, the same goes for the relationship between perceiving and being perceived, between the sensible and the sentient.¹⁸⁰ Here, again, we arrive at the literary ambivalence between the object and the subject. The idea of intertwining can be seen as a critique on the dualistic approach of object and subject as opposed notions: here, subject and object are seen as reversible, connected in complex ways, both being present simultaneously, merging into one another, like different lines of the same story. And it is here that the phenomenological approach to architecture, as used by Steven Holl, reveals its literary dimension: for him, the aim in architecture is for the subjective and objective to intertwine.¹⁸¹ Indeed, as Bachelard revealed, the continuous inversions of subject and object, their “unceasingly active” and interdependent relationship, characterize precisely the power of the poetic image.¹⁸² For Holl, the design of architectural space, by addressing all the senses and consciously bounding together the various phenomena of perception, should result in such “psychological spaces of association”; spaces, thus, which trigger the senses, allowing for associations, spaces in which one can be both observer and participant. Steven Holl suggests that architectural space can be a “psychological space of association”¹⁸³ by means of subtle combinations of material, light and details, paired with the experience of shifting perspectives when moving through, architectural space can thus invite the visitor to develop a heightened sensitivity, and be open to memories and associations.

72 In *Intertwining*, Holl states that perception is metaphorical: “perception of the everyday corresponds to a metaphorical experiencing of the world.”¹⁸⁴ For example: “. . . night’s darkness evokes a connection to Dionysian archetypes and mysteries, while the bright light of day is Apollonian, exuberant, and unconcealed.”¹⁸⁵ This idea of metaphorical perception serves for Holl as a means to not only recognize, but also produce a poetics of space. Therefore, in his architectural work, Holl frequently makes use of metaphors, both as a design tool, which helps to make design decisions, and as a recognizable element for the later perceiver of the building – an underlying storyline that generates associations by the visitor. In the 1980s project for a house at Martha’s Vineyard,¹⁸⁶ for instance, Holl used the theme of the whale in *Moby Dick*, the

179 Steven Holl, *Intertwining. Selected projects 1989-1995*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2007 [1996], p 12

180 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1968

181 “. . . subjective and objective must intertwine.” Steven Holl, *Intertwining. Selected projects 1989-1995*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2007 [1996], p 11, “Our aim is for an intertwining of the subjective-objective.” *Ibidem*, p. 16

182 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1994 [*La Poétique de l’Espace*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1964] p. xix

183 Steven Holl, *Intertwining. Selected projects 1989-1995*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2007 [1996], p. 13

184 *Ibidem*, p. 11

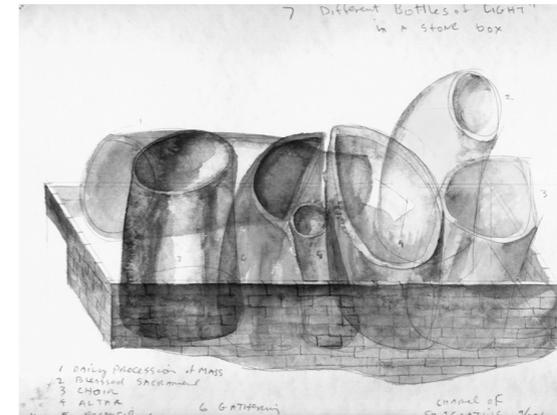
185 *Ibidem*, p. 11

186 House at Martha’s Vineyard, MA, United States, 1984-1988

1



2a



2b



1 The house at Martha’s Vineyard (1984-1988). The design was inspired by the metaphor of the beached whale of Melville’s *Moby Dick*

2a Watercolour sketch of the St Ignatius Chapel: metaphor of “7 different bottles of light in a stone box”.

2b Interior of the Chapel, the light entering from different directions, in different intensities.

house is conceived as a whale skeleton beached on the shore. In the church of St Ignatius,¹⁸⁷ a metaphorical image of seven coloured bottles in a massive box was used to allow for a rich variation in the way the light could enter the sacral space. Using such metaphorical means, Holl investigates the possibility for architecture to generate associations by simultaneously addressing different phenomena, to “elevate the experience of daily life”.¹⁸⁸

This notion of daily life is important to Steven Holl, who claims that the experience of the everyday is more open to phenomena than the formal attitude that many architects employ. Indeed, as Holl argues, architecture differs from the more autonomous arts by being used, by surrounding us, by becoming part of our daily lives. In everyday life we use buildings, rather than observing them as objects of art, we use them and are used to them in our daily practice. The perception of our surroundings is therefore not always a very focused one. By some theorists, this “out of focus”, or diffused perception is mentioned as an important but often forgotten aspect of architectural experience. When discussing diffused perception of the everyday life as the humus for a “lively, motivated, energetic relation of man and his environment”, Dutch architecture theorist Ton Verstegen refers to Walter Benjamin’s distinction between the tactile and optical experience of space, whereby the tactile is directly connected to the aspect of use.¹⁸⁹ Juhani Pallasmaa claims that unfocused vision makes us participants of space, “perspectival space and focused vision turn us into outside observers, whereas simultaneous, peripheral and haptic space encloses us and enfolds us in its embrace and makes us participants.”¹⁹⁰ As Pallasmaa makes clear, a meaningful perception of space is not a singular, merely optical one. It is the complexity of spatial experience, the overlapping of various phenomena and perspectives, which can provide a complexity of experiences. The unfocused vision, and the overlapping of phenomena and perspectives that Pallasmaa and Verstegen refer to, can be found in the watercolours of Steven Holl. In these images, colours and spaces overlap, the lines are often not sharp, the water suggests different shades of light. Indeed, the watercolours capture the associations derived from the reading of place, and they are the first evocation of the atmosphere of the project. While watercolours rather than text are the material in which Holl crafts his evocative descriptions of places and the first ideas of projects, in many cases it is literature that inspires them. The competition entry for a museum at Ile Seguin in Paris, for instance, was inspired by both the form and content of the nineteenth-century poem *Un coup de Dés*¹⁹¹ (a throw of dice) by French poet Mallarmé. The poem, which addressed the issue of chance, was graphically designed in a, especially for that time, remarkable way, leaving meaningful white spaces on the page, contributing to the rhythm of the

187 The Chapel of St. Ignatius, Seattle, WA, United States 1994-1997

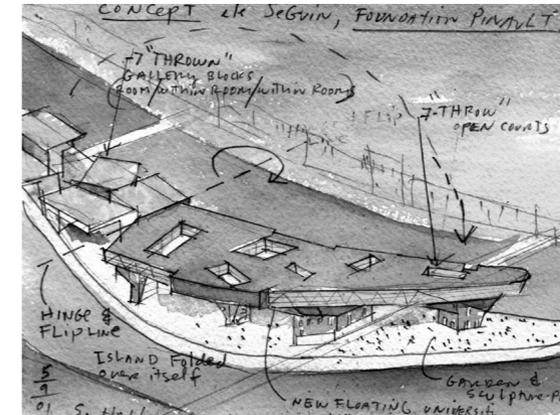
188 Ibidem, p 11.

189 Ton Verstegen, *Gebaren. Atmosferische waarneming en architectuur*, Art EZ Press / d'jonge Hond, Arnhem/Harderwijk, 2009, p. 21-23; Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, in *Illuminations*, Pimlico, London, 1999 [1955], p.233.

190 Juhani Pallasmaa, *Inhabiting Space and Time – the Loss and Recovery of Public Space*, in in *Architectural Positions. Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere*, Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (eds.), Sun Publishers, Nijmegen, 2009, p. 129

191 Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*, [A throw of dice will never abolish chance]1897

3



4a



4b



3 Competition project for Ile Seguin, Paris 2001, inspired by Mallarmé’s poem *Un coup de Des*.
4 a+b Knut Hamsun Center, Hamarøy, Norway, 2009. Museum dedicated to the Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun. Conceptual sketch – the building as a personality – and exterior view.

text.¹⁹² The competition entry is conceived as a throw of dice, causing an unexpected, slightly disordered organization of spaces. Second, the pauses in the poem, represented by the “white” in its graphic design, were translated to similar openness in design as a series of voids, patios in the continuous fabric of the building.

A recent project by Steven Holl, which takes literature as its very point of departure, is the Knut Hamsun Center in Norway, realized in 2009. The design for this museum, devoted to the writer who depicted Oslo and the Norwegian landscape around the turn of the twentieth century, is anchored as much in its scenic site in the far North as in the oeuvre of the writer. Empathizing with the conflictive personality of the writer and of his characters, like the protagonist in *Hunger*¹⁹³ who views the city from his troubled mental and physical state, the architecture offers conflicting perceptual moods – from deep dark corners, to light, open rooms with wide and open views of the Norwegian landscape. With its uncertain posture – not quite straight, slightly unbalanced – its grassy haircut and its balconies sticking out as hesitating arms, the building can be read as a body in itself, a personality. As Juhani Pallasmaa suggests in his description (evocative, indeed) of the project, the dark tower in the remote Norwegian landscape can be seen as an architectural portrait, a “description without words”.¹⁹⁴In this project, the intertwining of object and subject is outspoken.

2.3.2 Anchoring and intertwining:

Kiasma museum, Helsinki

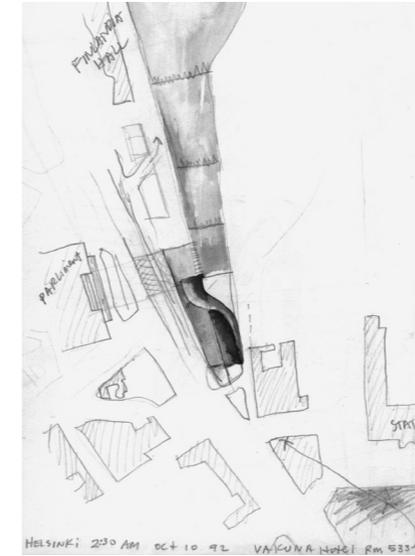
Thus, Steven Holl’s evocative approach is grounded in two aspects of phenomenological thought: place (anchoring) and perception (intertwining). The *Kiasma* museum for contemporary art in Helsinki, designed by Holl in the 1990s, illustrates both aspects of this approach. My choice of this project by Holl as an analytical model in this chapter is based on a number of considerations. First, it is precisely in this project that Holl unmistakably refers to phenomenological discourse as a source of inspiration – it is even in the name of the building itself, *Kiasma*, that the reference to Merleau-Ponty is made. Second, the *Kiasma* project is, in my view, clearly an example of “place-making”. The design anchors architecture to place, and it does so on several levels. It is possible, in this project, to reveal different qualitative layers of place, and reflect on how a “third condition” has arisen from the connection between the architecture and complex layers forming the genius loci of the site. Third, my choice of this project is also a personal one, for I lived in Helsinki during the period of *Kiasma*’s construction, and visited the museum many times after it opened in 1999: sometimes for an exhibition, sometimes

192 Such graphic experiments in poetry later appeared in, for instance, the work of the Belgian poet Paul van Ostaijen 1896-1928. An extensive collection of his work is Paul van Ostaijen, *Music-Hall*, Uitgeverij Ooievaar, Amsterdam, 1996

193 Knut Hamsun, *Hunger*, Canongate Books Ltd., Edinburgh 2001, [1890]

194 Juhani Pallasmaa, “ An Architectural Portrait. between the literary and embodied metaphor”, in: E.F. Langdalen et al, *Hamsun, Holl, Hamarøy*, Lars Müller Publishers, Baden 2010 pp.231-245, quote page 243.

1



2



- 1 Early sketch by Steven Holl, showing the position of the museum at the hinge of various urban and natural forces. Note the change in direction of the urban grid directly south of the site. Sketch 1992.
- 2 South façade of the *Kiasma* museum: the entrance, creating an accessible public urban space.

to guide visitors interested in its architecture, sometimes just to visit the museum café and meet with friends. I have known the site before and after Steven Holl's intervention, and have therefore witnessed how the architecture became anchored in the identity of the place, and vice-versa. This personal attachment to the project, I would like to stress, is no less relevant as a consideration for this analysis. Here, I have myself become part of the experiment, taking the roles of both outsider and participant. The place in Helsinki, and especially the place it has become since Holl's intervention, has rooted in me, its user and perceiver, and in Bachelard's and Pallasmaa's sense, I inhabit the place as much as it inhabits me. In the following paragraphs, I will first discuss how the building is anchored in the complex urban site in Helsinki, and then bring to the fore how Holl has generated perceptual qualities that undeniably cause an intertwining of subject and object, of visitor and building.

The site of the museum for contemporary art is the exact point in the city of Helsinki where the urban structure seems to fall apart in fragments: south of the site are the two different grids of the inner city, in the north-west begins the early twentieth century city extension Töölö, and in the north-east lies Töölö Lake. The urban grid of the inner city, designed in the early nineteenth century by Johan Albert Ehrenström, has two distinct directions. In the south-east lies the formal, nineteenth-century grid, with formal axes and monumental buildings, including Senat's white neoclassical church.¹⁹⁵ In the south-west, the grid is turned, thereby forming a number of triangular public spaces where the two directions meet, along the backbone of Helsinki's centre, Mannerheimintie road. The Kiasma site marks the end of this nineteenth-century grid, and takes up both directions, while Mannerheimintie bends slightly and continues its way up north. Töölö Lake, just north of the *Kiasma* site, has in its history been the centrepiece of many an urban scheme. In 1911, Bertel Jung proposed a central park in an English landscape style, of which Töölö Lake would form the southernmost part. To a certain extent, this idea still remains visible today: the lake can be seen as the starting point of a long, natural zone, a green void in the urban fabric of Helsinki. In Eliel Saarinen's vision for *Greater Helsinki*, Mannerheimintie became a grand axis, while the most important public buildings were situated along Töölö Lake. Likewise, Alvar Aalto proposed to build a modern urban waterfront on the banks of the inner lake. The concert hall *Finlandia*, designed by Aalto, was realized in the late 1970s at the lakeside, but remained solitary until recently – a residual of greater plans. The current plan of Helsinki's City Planning Department is to intensify Töölö Bay's function as a "meeting place for the people of Helsinki. A lively, varied and functional environment", reiterating the idea of a Central Park to "continue as a green area right up to the city block structure of the inner city".¹⁹⁶ The choice for the museum of contemporary art at this site can be seen as a late answer to the visions of Saarinen and Aalto. The project for the museum was also accompanied by a public discussion about the delicacy of the site. Within a stone's throw, on the opposite side of the street, Helsinki's Parliament building rises from the ground with its monumental staircase and columns. On the site itself, another symbol of institutional power was present: the statue of Marshal Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, who was the first President of

195 The Senat's church, as well as a large number of Helsinki's monumental buildings in this area have been designed by the German architect Carl Ludvig Engel. See for a more detailed description the *Urban guide Helsinki*, Helsinki City Planning Department, Helsinki 2006, p.11-12.

196 *Urban guide Helsinki*, Helsinki City Planning Department, Helsinki 2006, p.187

Finland. Critics feared his statue would be overshadowed by the museum for contemporary art. Meanwhile, right next to the site was one of the most interesting informal urban sites of Helsinki: the former railroad warehouses Makasiinit. This low ensemble of brick buildings was, in the late 1990s, the stage for Helsinki's alternative scene – until a fire destroyed it recently.¹⁹⁷ Weekly flea markets were held in the warehouses and their half-open courtyard, parties and art exhibitions took place, as well as temporary constructions and events. Steven Holl's design for the museum is carefully positioned in this field of urban forces. The different directions of the city structure are absorbed in the main composition of the building. Steven Holl speaks of a "line of culture", pointing from the city centre to *Finlandia Hall* through the *Kiasma* building, while a "line of nature" responds to the landscape and the lake¹⁹⁸. If Töölö Lake was sometimes seen as a symbol for the natural character of Helsinki, then again as the centrepiece for urban visions, the design of *Kiasma* responds to both interpretations. Its form bends towards the lake, opening the view towards it. Meanwhile, the building manifests itself to the city as a public statement, in the line of Aalto's and Saarinen's grand visions. Regarding the field of tension between institutional power and informality, the museum seems to welcome both sides with a certain ease.

Kiasma, in its composition and presence in the city, represents a building of national importance. Seen from the city centre, the building has a certain public monumentality in the way it arises from the junction of streets, in the way the pond on the west-side reflects the façade, and in the way it offers a suitable background for the statue of Finland's former president. On the other hand, the north façade, with its transparency, seems to express the more informal atmosphere of the artists. Holl placed the building at some distance from the street, thereby forming a public space, visible and accessible from the outside, open to all Helsinki's inhabitants. Simultaneously, this composition provided room for the statue, the façade forming a canvas behind it. Inside the museum, the entrance hall is the place where both volumes, and all narratives, come together. The ramp, next to the inner wall of the curved volume, has an almost landscape-like quality, as if running in a natural curve between two mountain ridges. The filtered light coming from above, strengthening this effect. Meanwhile, the entrance hall is one of the most urban interiors of Helsinki. This hall, formed by the encounter of the two volumes, can also be seen as the encounter between the formal and the informal. The orthogonal volume receives the formal grid of the inner city, and gives way to public urban spaces on open sides. In this way, it offers space in the south for an entrance square, marked by a long canopy which offers shelter from rain and snow. On the west side, the terrace of the museum café is situated, with a pond reflecting the statue of Mannerheim. The curved volume bends towards the lake, answering the other directions in the urban pattern with its inclination. While the orthogonal volume has an urban character, the curved volume responds to the landscape. This curved volume is cut off in the north, giving way to the glass façade offering a view of the *Finlandia Hall* and Töölö Lake. At precisely chosen places in the building, frag-

197 See Kimmo Oksanen, *Makasiinit 1899-2006*, Helsingin Sanomat, Helsinki, 2006 for the history of Makasiinit, and Panu Lehtovuori, *Experience and Conflict: The Production of Urban Space*, Ashgate, London 2010 for a discussion of their role in the urban scene in Helsinki.

198 Steven Holl, *Intertwining. Selected projects 1989-1995*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2007 [1996], p.88-90

ments of the city are carefully framed. From the first-floor balcony of the central hall, a gaze is turned backwards to the inner city, while some exhibition rooms place the Mannerheim statue in a prominent frame. In this way, both in the composition of the site and in the interior of the museum, Steven Holl succeeds in establishing a collaboration between the different urban fragments of Helsinki: the directions of the grids, the natural and urban atmospheres. Various aspects of the site have thus become part of the design. The national pride is reflected in the way the statue and the parliament building are dealt with. The contrast between formality and informality, symbolized by its neighbours, the parliament and the Makasiinit, is reflected in the now formal, imposing spaces in the museum, like the entrance hall and some of the large exhibition spaces, and then again the more informal moments in the composition: the freely shaped staircase, the window facing north, and the café that presupposes an informal relation to the public. In this way, the museum has anchored itself in the city, and made the site a place of encounter, not only of volumes, but an encounter of conflicting urban forces, and of inhabitants and art.

In 1999, the year when the Finnish Museum of Contemporary Art *Kiasma* opened its doors, Juhani Pallasmaa wrote that lived space is the space “in which the inner space of the mind and the external space of the world fuse into each other, forming a chiasmatic bond”.¹⁹⁹ No doubt, the mutual interest of Juhani Pallasmaa and Steven Holl in phenomenological thought is reflected in this quote. In a close reading of the *Kiasma* museum, all aspects mentioned in Steven Holl’s reflections about the sensory perception of space come to the fore: in the way the light is used, captured and led inside the building; in the materiality, colour phenomena and details; in the spatial organization that evokes a sense of movement as well as moments of silence; in the way the building sometimes evokes an outsiders’ perspectives, and sometimes allows participation. Steven Holl conceived the interior of the building as a “series of spatial sequences”.²⁰⁰ These sequences entail a rich spatial experience, which is caused by the continuously changing encounters between the curved and the orthogonal space. Holl states: “The spaces of the intertwining curves of *Kiasma* avoid both the rigidity of a classical approach and the excessive complexity of expressionism. The dynamic internal circulation, with its curving ramps and stairs, allows for an open, interactive viewing, inspiring visitors to choose their own routes through the galleries. Unlike a hierarchically sequenced or ordered movement, this open-ended, casual circulation provokes moments of pause, reflection, and discovery.”²⁰¹

In that sense, the building has an almost urban quality, in the sense that it offers a diversity of spaces: both continuous and enclosed spaces, views and shelters, direct and indirect light. If we would take Gordon Cullen’s method of analysing townscapes, as mentioned before in this chapter, and make a sketch of every new spatial frame, we would indeed find a sequence of

199 Juhani Pallasmaa, *Lived Space. Embodied Experience and Sensory Thought*, in: Juhani Pallasmaa, Peter MacKeith (editor) *Encounters. Architectural Essays*, Rakennustietot Oy, Helsinki, 2005, p. 129

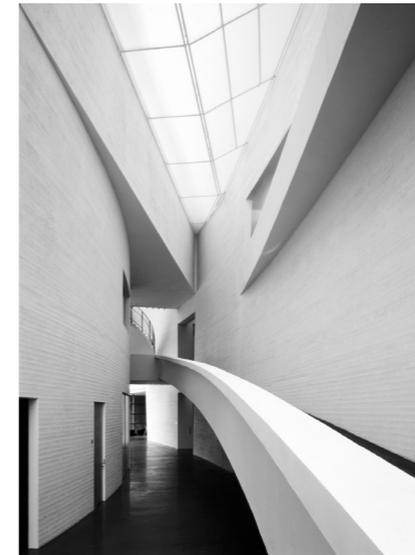
200 Steven Holl, *1986-1996*, El Croquis, Madrid, 1996, p. 146

201 Steven Holl, *Intertwining. Selected projects 1989-1995*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2007 [1996], p.90

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4



3 Northern façade of the *Kiasma* museum: opening the view towards Aalto’s Finlandia hall and Töölö Lake, meanwhile laying bare the inside of the museums artistic content; reflecting the informality of the artistic scene.

4 The central hall of the *Kiasma* museum of contemporary art Helsinki.

different perspectives. In his later writing, Holl calls this shifting of perspectives “parallax”.²⁰² This overlap of perspective and changing atmospheres indeed stimulates an embodied experience of the building.

The architectural use of light plays an important part in this experience, as the light guides the visitor through the sequence of rooms. Sometimes the light is soft, reaching the walls indirectly via hidden roof lights, giving a sense of enclosure; sometimes a hint is given of a continuity of spaces by means of light; at other times, a window brings in bright daylight, opening the perspective to the city. The choice of materials strengthens this effect. The curved, white-plastered walls of the exhibition spaces seem to catch the light in an atmosphere of softness. Sandblasted glass is used to refract the light before it reaches the rooms. In addition, the specifics of the site play a role in dealing with light: the northern latitude makes for a low position of the sun and long shadows in winter, and light entering almost from the north in summer. This extraordinary position of the sun in Helsinki is reflected in the shape of the building and the positioning of the windows. The aspect of scale is used as a device in directing the perception of the museum’s visitors. Holl chose to “create silence by eliminating the intermediate scale”.²⁰³ This means that most attention is paid to the large scale of the building and its spatial sequences, and to the details of door handles, staircases and so forth, while the intermediate scale that usually accentuates the spaces by means of skirting boards, window frames or thresholds is left behind. Holl suggests that this neutralizes the exhibitions spaces, limiting their architectural presence to their very shape, their white walls and their dark concrete floors, thereby leaving the intermediate scale to the works of art exhibited. The detailed scale, then, receives more attention. Door handles, for example, are big and heavy, made of sandblasted steel. Opening a door therefore involves using the whole weight of the body.

The core idea of the *chiasm/intertwining*²⁰⁴ for Merleau-Ponty is that the body is not a passive object, nor only a perceiving subject. Rather, embodied perception implies that the body is simultaneously subject and object, it actively perceives and is perceived by others, or even itself. The museum takes the idea of *chiasm/intertwining* beyond the perceptual aspects of its embodied experience. In the *Kiasma* museum, the metaphor of the chiasmatic bond reappears in an architectural work, as a scheme of a crossing of volumes, but also as an architectural ambition on a more conceptual level. The composition as a crossing of two entities, a metaphorical translation of the chiasm, is perhaps the most superficial of all of the intertwinings that Holl established with his design. Not only do the space of the mind and the space of the world fuse in the experience of this building, as the most abstract translation of the concept suggests, also different layers and stories of the city of Helsinki cross at the site of *Kiasma*. In this case, the operations of anchoring and intertwining (*chiasm*) run parallel: the *chiasm*, here, is precisely the operational concept that enables Holl to anchor the building to the site-specific conditions. Indeed, Holl’s *Kiasma* museum may be described in such terms. It evokes a complex corporeal experience, which indeed evokes an intertwining of the subjective and the

202 Steven Holl, *Parallax*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2000, p. 384.

203 Steven Holl, *Intertwining. Selected projects 1989-1995*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2007 [1996], p.90

204 *Chiasm/Intertwining* is exactly the title of the chapter in Merleau-Ponty’s *The Visible and The Invisible*

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5 Exhibition space. Filtered light from above, plastered walls and a lack of “intermediate scale” elements.

6 Detail of spiral staircase.

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objective. According to Cathryn Vasseleu, who has in detail studied vision and touch in the work of Merleau-Ponty, the “chiasm describes the experience of corporeality as a complex . . . moment of reversibility, vulnerability and incorporation”.²⁰⁵ Indeed, in *Kiasma*, details evoke an embodied experience of space. The strength of Holl’s approach might be found in this evocation, in acknowledging that architecture actively calls upon the perception of its users and visitors to become a lived part of its environment. The museum itself evokes reversibility, vulnerability and incorporation – it incorporates the narratives of the site and its history; it is reversible in its very character, both formal and informal, both urban and natural; and it is vulnerable in that it invites visitors to participate in its experience. Visitors of *Kiasma* are challenged to experience the differences in light, the sequence of perceptual frames, and to reverse the relation between formal and informal, landscape and nature, active and passive, subject and object. They are guided in this challenge by light and material, by spaces of silence and spaces where art and city speak.

2.3.3 Evocative description in architectural education

The example of Steven Holl’s Kiasma museum in Helsinki shows how the notions explored in this chapter can encourage architects to engage lived experience in their site-specific explorations as well as in their designs. In this way, evocative description offers ways to respond to the task of architecture to offer a meaningful relation between people and their environment, or as Juhani Pallasmaa defines the task of architecture, “to mediate between the world and ourselves, and to provide a horizon by which to comprehend our existential condition”.²⁰⁶ He writes this in an essay which is explicitly presented as an echo of Italo Calvino’s *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*.²⁰⁷ While Calvino spoke of a task for literature in the fast and continuously changing contemporary society, precisely because “there are things that only literature can give us, by means specific to it”,²⁰⁸ Pallasmaa replies that architecture, by its own means of building, could provide meaningful places to inhabit. This imaginative dialogue with Italo Calvino is one example of how literature, as well as other forms of art, take a prominent position in Pallasmaa’s reflections, illustrating the productive exchange between architecture and other disciplines in understanding the human experience of space.

In this chapter I have intended to show a potentially productive relationship between architecture and the literary concept of evocative description. I did not aim to draw a direct link between literary texts and architectural projects, but rather wanted to show how a literary

205 Cathryn Vasseleu, *Textures of Light. Vision and Touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty*, Warnick Studies in European Philosophy, Routledge, London 1998, p. 35

206 Juhani Pallasmaa, *Six themes for the next millennium* (1994), in: Juhani Pallasmaa, Peter MacKeith (editor) *Encounters. Architectural Essays*, Rakennustietot Oy, Helsinki, 2005, p. 300

207 Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, Vintage Books, New York, 1988

208 Ibidem, as quoted by Juhani Pallasmaa, *Six themes for the next millennium* (1994), in: Juhani Pallasmaa, Peter MacKeith (editor) *Encounters. Architectural Essays*, Rakennustietot Oy, Helsinki, 2005, p. 299

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2



approach, based on the concept of evocative description of architecture and place, could offer new ways for architects to understand and use the experience of space and place. Literary skills such as observation, imagination and receptivity prove to be highly relevant for architects to evocatively describe and design places. Through novels and poetry we have learned how literary writers observe and imagine the relationship between people and their environment. Through exercises of observation and imagination, architects can be encouraged to include *lived* aspects of space in their architectural considerations. The poetic receptivity to sensory perception and detail can be trained to achieve a richer perceptual quality in design, if we acknowledge that perception is not a passive undergoing of sensory impulses, but rather a “creative receptivity”.²⁰⁹ In the preceding part of this chapter, I have shown how some individual architects make use of these skills of evocative description in their practice; the following shows a number of educational examples with which to draw the attention of architects and students and to involve them in developing such skills.

Best known, perhaps, are John Hejduk’s courses at the Cooper Union School of Architecture in New York.²¹⁰ Hejduk, in his own work continuously fading the boundaries between architecture and poetry, compiled a great number of student exercises that drew upon poetic concepts. Aspects of dream and imagination often informed steps in the experimental design process in the courses at the Cooper Union.

The less known Valparaiso School of Architecture in Chile is founded on the “proposition of employing the poetic word as the foundation of an architectural polemic”.²¹¹ Part of the educational programme are yearly expeditions on the South-American continent, aiming to explore the poetic qualities of the territories. The first journey, undertaken in the 1960s by a group of architects and poets, is seen as the birth of the school’s pedagogical approach.²¹² The pavilions of the school, the so-called Open City, are literally built by teachers and students, as physical results of the school’s “self-conscious way of acting and thinking that sponsors an intuitive process informed by spatial and poetic concerns”.²¹³ Poetry is not seen as a product (a poem) but rather as an approach, a “way of acting and doing creatively”.²¹⁴ The initial educational methods of the school, such as the expeditions, proved successful, and are still actively used today.

At the Bartlett School of Architecture in London, postgraduate students are taught to explore

209 “For Merleau-Ponty, perception is a creative receptivity rather than a passive capacity to receive impressions.” Cathryn Vasseleu, *Textures of Light. Vision and Touch in Irigay, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty*, Warnick Studies in European Philosophy, Routledge, London 1998, p. 24

210 See for a detailed overview of Hejduks pedagogical methods: Ulrich Franzen, Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Kim Shkapich, *Education of an architect: a point of view, the Cooper Union School of Art & Architecture*, Monacelli Press, Michigan 1999; or the first version John Hejduk, *Education of an Architect. The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture of the Cooper Union*, Rizzoli Press, New York 1988

211 Ann M. Pendleton-Jullian, *The Road That Is Not A Road and the Open City, Ritoque, Chile*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1993, p.16.

212 The first journey Almereida and a number of more recent expeditions of the school are discussed in: Patricio del Real, *Wandering Around*, in OASE 80, *On Territories*, Tom Avermate, Klaske Havik, Hans Teerds and Nancy Meijsmans (eds.), NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2009, pp. 61-69

213 Ann M. Pendleton-Jullian, *The Road That Is Not A Road and the Open City, Ritoque, Chile*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1993, p.13

214 Ibidem, p.23

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3



2+3 Explore-Lab VI workshop Poetry and Architecture. Site-specific writing at the NDSM wharf in Amsterdam.

DESCRIPTION ~ Urban Literacy

“the creative potential of writing as a form of ‘critical spatial practice’”. The course, set up by Jane Rendell, aims at developing site-writing as a mode of operation in architectural research and education. The students investigate a site of their choice and produce a text that “researches, critiques and responds physically to this site”.²¹⁵ In such writing, objective measurements coincide with personal associations, combining observations and imagination in a creative process.

In Stockholm, researchers Katja Grillner and Rolf Hughes are conducting courses on writing in practice-based architectural research. Grillner addresses writing “both as a medium through which to develop a critical position towards the architectural, design, or art project, and as a means through which to carefully explore and/or design spatial conditions”.²¹⁶ Hughes, himself a writer, holds a plea for introducing students, scholars and practitioners in the field of design to “literary concepts and rhetorical practices”, which “can furnish the practical as well as conceptual tools required to become not merely better scholars and critic, but also better designers”.²¹⁷ Their exercises include site-specific writing, for example on the basis of narratives, but they also see writing as a critical tool in the process of research and design. Indeed, by writing from another viewpoint, the author can see his work in a different light. In this way, writing offers “critical counterpoints” to the project, by taking “the role of the critic *in relation to* the project or even *within* the project itself”.²¹⁸

In the course *City&literature* I have initiated at the Faculty of Architecture, Delft University of Technology, I have tested the viability of literary exercises for Master students of architecture. Acknowledging that most architecture students do not have outspoken literary ambitions, the aim was not to produce interesting literary texts, but rather to use literary exercises to heighten students’ perceptual receptivity and awareness of spatial experience. This course, which is positioned in the curriculum as an elective connected to the Public Building/Public Realm studios, offers ways to use writing as a tool in site research and design. As such, it aims to broaden the student’s understanding of urban experience and to critically reflect on design practices. The *City&Literature* course consists of several parts exploring the potential of a literary approach in site research and architectural design. Part 1, which takes the form of a theory seminar, introduces a selection of key texts on cities, written from a literary perspective, such as texts by Walter Benjamin and Italo Calvino. Also more theoretical texts on the relation between architecture and literature, like Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space* are discussed. In part 2 the possibilities of creative writing are explored. By looking at the city from various (literary) perspectives, the student is encouraged to develop new methods in both site analysis and design. Part 3 consists of an analysis of literary practices. In this part, the work of architects

215 Jane Rendell, introduction to Haecceity Papers Volume 3 Issue 1: *Pattern*, fall 2007, pp. 4-5

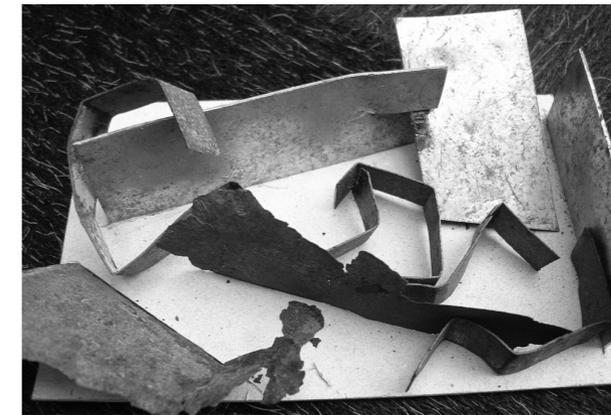
216 Katja Grillner in : Katja Grillner and Rolf Hughes, *Room within a view: a Conversation on Writing and Architecture*, in *OASE 70 Architecture & Literature, Reflections/ Imaginations*. Christoph Grafe, Klaske Havik and Madeleine Maaskant (eds.), Nai Publishers, Rotterdam 2006, p. 58

217 Rolf Hughes in : Katja Grillner and Rolf Hughes, *Room within a view: a Conversation on Writing and Architecture*, in *OASE 70 Architecture & Literature, Reflections/ Imaginations*. Christoph Grafe, Klaske Havik and Madeleine Maaskant (eds.), Nai Publishers, Rotterdam 2006, pp. 68-69

218 Katja Grillner in : Katja Grillner and Rolf Hughes, *Room within a view: a Conversation on Writing and Architecture*, in *OASE 70 Architecture & Literature, Reflections/ Imaginations*. Christoph Grafe, Klaske Havik and Madeleine Maaskant (eds.), Nai Publishers, Rotterdam 2006, p. 58



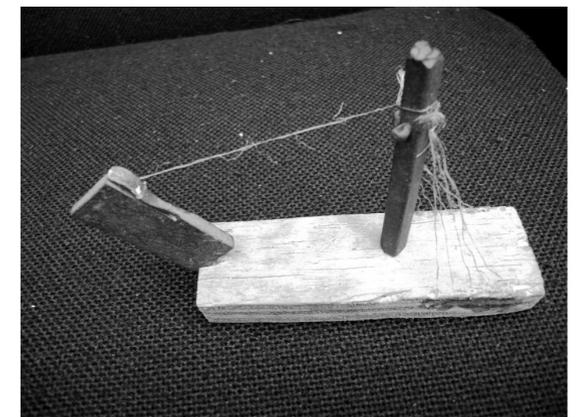
4a



4b+c



4d+e



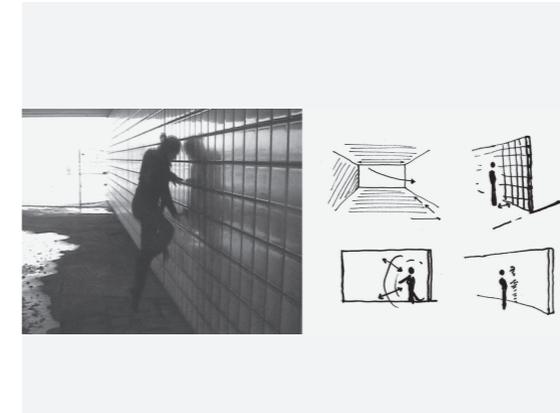
4a-e Switching between text and model-making.

using literary influences in their work is analysed and discussed. Different techniques, both literary and architecturally, are used to present the findings. At the end of the semester, the seminar group starts to function as an editorial board of a magazine. The group decides how to collect the theoretical reflections and the results of creative writing exercises in a magazine, which is presented to visiting critics at the last session. The creative writing exercises begin with drawing attention to other senses than the visual. One of the first exercises, when the students have just joined the first meeting, is to describe their journey from home to the lecture room at the faculty, solely by describing the sounds they have heard. It is a simple, accessible exercise, but it often surprises students in how much they have unconsciously perceived. Similar descriptive exercises, in which one specific sense is highlighted, are carried out in relation to the students' site of investigation. When the design of the students come into play, aspects of time, weather, site-specific circumstances or characters are used in their descriptions, moving from the observational to the imaginary. Creative writing about their designs involves imagining the future place as *lived*. This is encouraged by exercises that presuppose another character, which enables students to perceive the design from another point of view. In this way, indeed as Katja Grillner suggests, writing becomes an act of critical reflection of and within the project. By means of such writing exercises, students in the course have gained critical knowledge about their own design, and have been able to alter or sharpen their design decisions.

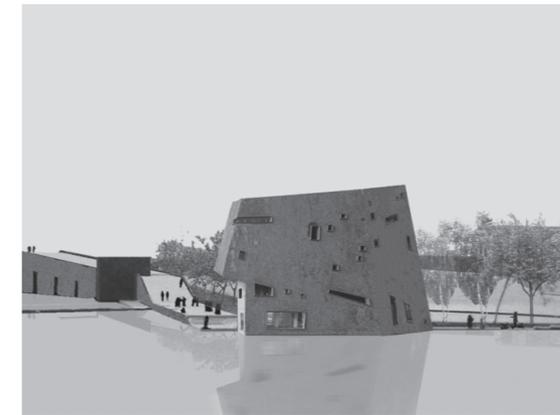
In summer 2008, I conducted the workshop *Poetry and Architecture*, of the Explore-Lab graduation studio at the Faculty of Architecture.²¹⁹ During five days, students were challenged to develop a "creative receptivity" through exercises of poetic writing in combination with model-making. The first days, theoretical and conceptual thinking were set aside in favour of direct bodily perception. A choreographer took the students on a tour to trigger the senses, by physical explorations of weight, direction and movement. By being blindfolded, students were made aware of other senses than the visual. This sense of blindness reoccurred later in the week when a dinner was organized in a "dark restaurant". The former harbour terrain NDSM in Amsterdam was the site of investigation for the workshop. Arriving by boat, the students approached the site from the rough concrete ramps that used to hold large vessels. The ramp, by its very dimensions, materiality and position, already gave way to an extraordinary spatial experience. Its tilted surface slightly changed the sense of balance, its vast dimensions confused the sense of scale, and its being enclosed by concrete obstacles on one side, and the rusty steel ship-lock on the waterside, evoked the impression of being simultaneously in an enclosed interior and in a vast landscape. The concrete and rusty steel objects, overrun by grass and brambles, contributed to an atmosphere loaded with memory. It was this environment that students were encouraged to explore, some of them barefoot to feel the texture, temperature and materiality of the surface, some set out for textual traces in the many objects

219 This workshop was initiated by the Explore-Lab VI students. The organising team consisted of students Kees Lemmens, Arno Geesink, Elza Heemskerck, Wouter Moorlag, Sybren Boomsma and Ferry in't Veld. Three other tutors have been invited: Ana Mafalda Luz, Laura Theng and Alberto Altès. Apart from the twenty Explore-Lab students from Delft, ten students from Istanbul have joined the workshop, as well as two students from Barcelona. A report of the workshop has been published in *The Architecture Annual 2007-2008*, Delft University of Technology/ 010 Publishers, Rotterdam 2009, pp. 44-47

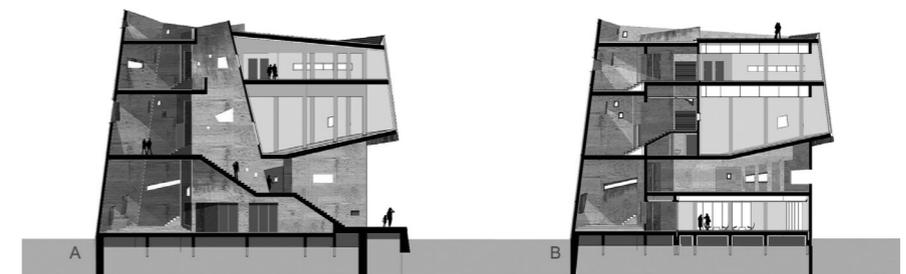
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7



- 5 Diploma project Lieke Sauren. Analysis of bodily perception and sound.
- 6+7 Diploma project Lieke Sauren. Design for a pedestrian route along the south bank of the IJ, Amsterdam.

lying around and the sheer amount of colourful graffiti texts sprayed on the concrete surfaces, while others searched for places of silence within the site. Each individual encounter with the site was put into words. The poetic texts derived from these explorations served the following day as the basis for the intuitive model-making from materials collected at the site. The individual models and poems were discussed in groups, and the outcome of these discussions were again, but this time collectively, put into words. The last endeavour was a collective one – using the collective poems for a final model, installation or written manifesto. In the big 1:1 scale tent, put up on the faculty terrain by one of the groups as a result of their explorations, the closing dinner was served. From an educational point of view, it is important to mention that the process, shifting from one discipline to another, using words and models, was more important than the concrete built, drawn or written results. The main goal was for students to develop a receptivity for the very characteristics of a site, through their own sensory perceptions, imagination and associations. The sequence from text to model and back to text guided an intuitive process that was productive on both the individual and the collective level. The repetitive shifting between modes of production helped to quickly produce and to collectively discuss products, which in turn allowed for a shifting between intuition and analysis. In that way, the chosen educational model offered the students a way to develop a “creative receptivity”, as well as offering tools to make such receptivity operational in architectural design.

The last educational example that I wish to discuss in this chapter is the graduation project of architect Lieke Sauren, carried out over the course of a year in the Public Realm diploma studio.²²⁰ In this project of research and design, aspects of evocative description are explicitly used, in a critique against “alienation, aloofness and isolation”²²¹ caused by the dominance of transitional space in the contemporary city. Following a theoretical study about the relationship between the body and the public realm, Sauren began to investigate the banks of the Amsterdam IJ River by means of veritable bodily encounters. Using her experience as a dancer, Sauren selected a number of places around the IJ-banks, differing in size, materiality and atmosphere, and allowed her body to react to the sounds, the play of light and shadows, the extent of enclosure or vastness, and the views towards the water. She discovered how the body reacted differently to different spatial characteristics of the sites, by moving slower or faster, changing direction, seeking open space or protection from objects, walls and trees. She then chose to focus her further research and design on the South banks of the IJ, where, she noticed, embodied experience was most disturbed by the sound and speed of traffic. In order to establish a better pedestrian connection between the city centre and the waterfront, she designed a public path extending from the rear of Amsterdam central station, along the riverbank, towards the public quay further east. “A route,” states Sauren, “that not only links places, but also makes people aware of their surroundings, so that the place itself gains significance; a slow movement at the waterside, one that plays with the differences in height and changes in

220 The diploma studio Public Realm at the Faculty of Architecture in Delft is organised by Susanne Komossa and myself. The group of which Lieke Sauren was part, Public Realm Amsterdam IJ-banks, was tutored by myself, in collaboration with Marten de Jong and Jan Engels in 2005-2006.

221 Lieke Sauren, *Waterfront on the move*, in: *The Architecture Annual 2006-2007*, Delft University of Technology / 010 Publishers, Rotterdam, 2008. pp. 184-186

direction and material.”²²² The visitors centre, situated along the public route, is designed with great attention for light, materiality and view. Some parts of this building, such as a public staircase and a viewing platform, have deliberately been designed to remain open to the elements, to allow the experience of the strong winds, the smell of water and sounds of activity, that so characterize the city of Amsterdam.

Coming to the end of this chapter through a number of student projects, a reflection on the chapter of *Description* is appropriate. I have started from the question of definition – *what* is an evocative description of space in literature – by actually describing its manifestation in various literary sources. I have then approached the question of relevance – *why* it is important to explore such notions in architecture – by formulating a critique on the lack of attention to aspects of lived experience in contemporary architectural discourse and practice, and by highlighting a number of relevant theoretical positions from the field of philosophy, geography and architectural theory. I hope to have shown in the last part of this chapter *how* architects have managed to address such issues, and how architects and students alike can be trained through evocative description to develop a sensitivity to site-specific elements and to reach a better understanding of the human experience of space. The concept of description as an instrument in architecture thus brings together aspects of literature, phenomenology, human sciences and architectural design, and allows for these various disciplines to work together. As such, the concept of description allows the architect to widen his or her gaze, offering a variety of perspectives and layers of perception that are often neglected. Ultimately, description entails the evocative site-specific reading and “rewriting”, engaging lived experience in research and design.

222 Ibidem, p.184

3 TRANSCRIPTION

3.1 TRANSCRIPTION

3.1.1 Writing across: social activity in literary spaces

*I would like there to exist places that are stable, unmoving, intangible, untouched and almost un-
touchable, unchanging, deep-rooted; places that might be points of reference of departure, of origin . . . Such
places don't exist, and it's because they don't exist that space becomes a question, ceases to be self-
evident . . . Space is a doubt: I have constantly to mark it, to designate it. It's never mine, never given to
me, I have to conquer it.*²²³

As Georges Perec suggests in this fragment, the relationship between architecture and the activities of the people who use and inhabit it is not neutral. This chapter departs from the observation that architecture is influenced by social practices, and that even so, architecture, by giving shape to people's environment, has its influence on social behaviour. This dynamic relationship between people and places is the key focus of this chapter, and I introduce *transcription* as a conceptual tool to address this interactivity. First, the very word *Transcription* implies a *directional* way of writing: "trans" is the Latin preposition "across" or "through". The etymological dictionary notes: "to write across, i.e. to transfer in writing."²²⁴ The directional aspect that the word transcription implies, is crucial in that transcription can be understood as a dynamic notion. First, I will show how aspects of movement and activity in literary writings are closely connected to the spaces in which they take place, and often point at social practices; offering information about the way people move through, use and appropriate space. Literary texts on how people behave in the city shine a light on power relations in society, showing how the social codes of different user groups relate to specific urban places. Therefore, such literary urban portraits are of interest for sociologists, cultural philosophers and others concerned with social and spatial practices. A second aspect of transcription that I wish to discuss has to do with its potential as an experimental practice: it searches the boundaries of the discipline by "writing through". Literary examples are the experimental practices of the literary movement Oulipo, or the "spatial" literature of Joyce and Danielewksi. In these writings space, even the space of the novel itself, is constantly questioned, designated, marked or conquered. Here, I will highlight issues of transgression and violation within the space of literature, providing a passage to an architectural discussion of these concepts further on in this chapter. Third, I will address the commonly used meaning of transcription as "to write a version of something", or "to write in a different medium; transliterate".²²⁵ When looking for direct transcriptions into other media, the transcriptions of literary scenes in film or theatre are probably most common. I will briefly discuss some attempts to transcribe literary scenes

²²³ Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces*, Penguin Classics, London 2008, p. 91 [Espaces d'espace, Editions Galilée, Paris 1974]

²²⁴ *Origins. A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*. Eric Partridge, Greenwich House, New York 1983 [1958], p. 598, entry 22. *transcribere*.

²²⁵ *The Penguin Pocket English Dictionary*, Penguin Group, London 1990 [1985], p. 904, entry *transcribe*

to architectural ones. Writing another version of a text, however, can also happen within literature itself, namely through the reader, who can take on the role of an active participant. This brings me to discuss the interactivity between writer and reader as producers of the text.

First, let us look at the meaning of transcription as a dynamic process, moving from one realm to another. In literary works, spatial metaphors often have to do with direction and movement:

“In the common use of terms such as *perspective*, *point-of-view*, and *passage*, we see that *where* a person stands *in relation to* surroundings or materials is a central consideration for both architects and writers . . . Literature is . . . full of passages in the architectural sense, taking the reader from here to there and back again.”²²⁶

Indeed, in writing about spaces, the aspect of *action* implied by the space: a passage, a pathway, a threshold, a door, an opening to another space, can play a part in the narrative. Space can encourage characters to move, pass through, undertake action. In literary reflections about changes in society, architectural and urban scenes not only serve as the decor against which narratives of activity can unfold, these scenes also play an important part in depicting social practices. As Marilyn Chandler argues in her investigation of houses in American fiction, our built environment, and the way we live in it, “has a good deal to do with the way we tell our stories . . . both architecture and literature are simultaneously reflective and formative social forces. In both, implicit issues of gender and class lie behind the politics of style.”²²⁷ Indeed, literature both reflects the social codes and the use of the city, while it may also take part in its process of change. In their own ways, both architecture and literature represent, reflect on and produce societal behaviour. Literary expressions of urban life have helped sociologists and other theorists to understand the relationship between architectural and urban space and social practice. Sociologist Richard Sennett, for example, often refers to literary descriptions when discussing the changes in early modern society. Especially in that early modern period, around the turn of the nineteenth century, literature, by witnessing the impact of social changes, played a role in their conceptualization, as well as in their production. This role of literature was particularly important because of the confusion that modern life brought about. As Sennett explains:

“Ordinary experience never presents itself [as] sharply [as the novelist describes them], but the cities of the nineteenth century were particularly unclear. . . . One way to hold [the] magic mirror up to social reality was to turn places into characters . . . personifying specific places helped the nineteenth-century writers in a task that falls upon all novelists, that of connecting events widely separated in time.”²²⁸

226 In OASE's issue on Architecture&Literature, Stockholm-based researchers Katja Grillner and Rolf Hughes discuss the variety of metaphors shared by architectural and literary discourses. Katja Grillner and Rolf Hughes, *Room within a View: A Conversation on Writing and Architecture*, in: OASE 70 *Architecture&Literature Reflections/Imaginations*, NAI publishers, Rotterdam, 2006, pp. 58-59

227 Marilyn R. Chandler, *Dwelling in the Text. Houses in American fiction*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991, p.6

228 Richard Sennett, *The Consciousness of the Eye*, Knopf, New York 1991, p. 190-191, see for Sennett's literary references concerning the changes in public urban life also: Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, Knopf, New York, 1974, London 2002

Benjamin's “flaneur”, as well as Baudelaire's “man on the street” for instance, were literary characters that could only have been born out of the new urban conditions. Likewise, the literary accounts of Paris and Berlin have had a role in producing new forms of urban life, and in producing new images of the cities, by the “characters” given to them by writers. Philosopher Gilles Deleuze sees literary writers as the “symptomatologists” of society, and some of them may, through literature, offer valuable alternatives to social problems and complex power relations.²²⁹ Deleuze sees a task for literature in experimenting on the real “. . . at once fashioning a critique of power and opening a passage towards new possibilities of living”.²³⁰ This idea of literature as a passage to new ways of living can also be true for architecture. If indeed “when properly constructed, [literary works] are machines that make something happen”,²³¹ one could state the same for architectural works. If we consider architecture as a dynamic, rather than a static notion, architecture can offer space for action, showing new ways to live.

Walter Benjamin's reflections about the Parisian arcades (or “passages” in French)²³² are but one example of literature that tells how intrinsically space and social practice are connected. According to René Boomkens, Benjamin was a collector of “important data, considering almost every aspect of the nineteenth century Parisian culture and society”, which together lay a basis for a “philosophy of modern urban experience”.²³³ This catalogue of data included numerous descriptions of how people behaved in urban space, most notably the one of the *flaneur* as a new type of urban character, with his own way of perceiving urban life. Even though Benjamin's work in collecting and describing urban life has never resulted in a literary novel, his work is, I would argue, to a large extent literary: by its use of characters, and by its attention to details, for instance. Numerous examples exist of literary texts revealing similar observations of urban life, in which the spaces described are closely connected to human activities, of which the urban portraits by Charles Baudelaire, to whom Benjamin so frequently refers, is but one.²³⁴ In such novels, the relationship between urban places and social practice is fully explored. James Joyce, for instance, depicts everyday life in Dublin through the urban experiences of the various protagonists in *Dubliners*.²³⁵ Through the everyday patterns of these inhabitants, the city is shown to include multiple layers of experience: the act of shopping

229 Ronald Bogue has in detail discussed Deleuze's use of literature throughout his philosophical works. Bogue frequently refers to Deleuze's metaphor of health: literary writers as symptomatologists of sickness in society, and as the ones capable offering new possibilities. Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Literature*, Routledge, New York / London 2003, See for symptomatology especially chapter one, *Sickness, Signs, and Sense*, pp. 9-30.

230 Ibidem, pp. 188

231 “Language as a mode of action” Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Literature*, Routledge, New York / London 2003, pp. 187-192,

232 Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagenwerk*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1982 [1943-40]

233 René Boomkens. *Een drempelwereld. Moderne ervaring en stedelijke openbaarheid*, NAI publishers, Rotterdam 1998, pp.114-115, translation from Dutch kmh

234 In the early modern city of the nineteenth century, the French writer Charles Baudelaire used literary evocations of places as a mirror to understand the confusing modern city of which he was part.

235 James Joyce, *Dubliners*, Everymans Library, London, 1991 [1914]. This reference was also made in my earlier article in OASE, Christoph Grafe, Klaske Havik and Madeleine Maaskant (eds.), OASE 70 *Architecture&Literature Reflections/Imaginations*, NAI publishers, Rotterdam, 2006

in the city, the social role of the boarding house or the theatre, the manners when travelling by tram, the frequent encounters in bars, the stratified society featuring gentry, maids and servants. His Dutch contemporary, Louis Couperus, depicted the bourgeois life of his protagonist Eline Vere against the background of the urban scenes of The Hague at the turn of the twentieth century. In Couperus's *The Hague*, the Royal Theatre is the place to see other people and to be seen, while the private houses form the stage for intimate meetings between families. The social codes of the bourgeois families are linked with the city and its seasons: in winter, the public urban spaces are presented as dark passages, where the carriages of the rich families travel, often haunted by wind and storm, between the theatre and the warm and richly decorated houses. In summer, the beach in Scheveningen becomes the place to meet one another. In the urban spaces of Couperus, social codes are clearly described: rich families have designated areas at the beach and travel by carriage, while ordinary citizens travel to the shore by horse-tram:

The trams leading from the old Scheveningseweg to the Kurhaus were filled to burst. On the tram stop Anna Paulownastraat - Laan Copes van Cattenburgh they were stormed by the waiting crowd. In an instant, a large amount of people had filled the wagons and overloaded the platforms, or even climbed on the roof rack. They pushed each other, grave of countenance, even for the sake of the least standing place, merciless for desperate fellows. Many of them were women, with an arched nervousness, and a colorful flurry of light toilets walking around the tram, peering through the glass for a hint of an empty spot. . . .

. . . the people left behind immediately looked the other way for the following tram, because hey, the horses were already in motion and the serious faces of the happy passengers were closely packed, shining with happiness after their victory.

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"What a foule! It's terrible," said Eline, looking down at the crowd with a quiet smile. She sat next to Betsy in the open Landauer. Dirk, the coachman, had been compelled for a moment to stand still, but now there was some movement in the traffic jam of carriages on the road. . . . And while Dirk drove past their carriages, she greeted her acquaintances with a most charming kindness: she surely did not want to have an air of proudness, even if her chestnut horses trotted so gracefully."²³⁶

Likewise, German accounts of the life of the turn-of-the-century bourgeois rely largely on the literary explorations of Alexander Döblin and other authors. In Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*,²³⁷ the conflicting relation between the protagonist Franz Biberkopf and the modern city of Berlin depicts, as Bart Keunen remarks, "the tragic duality between the city and the city dweller".²³⁸ On the scale of architecture, Georges Perec makes an apartment building come to life in the minds of the readers by writing about the daily activities and habits

236 Louis Couperus, *Eline Vere, een Haagse roman*, Rainbow klassiek, Amsterdam, 2006 [1889], p. 226-228, translation kmh. A recent English translation by Ina Rilke has been published as Louis Couperus, *Eline Vere. A Novel of The Hague*, Archipelago Books, New York 2010.

237 Alexander Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Continuum, London/ New York 1961 / 2004 [Berlin 1929]

238 Bart Keunen, *De Verbeelding van de Grootstad. Stads- en wereldbeelden in het proza van de moderniteit*, VUB Press, Gent University, Brussels 2000 [*The Imagination of the Metropolis. City- and Worldviews in the prose of modernity*], p. 295, translation from Dutch kmh.

of its various inhabitants in *Life. A User's Manual*.²³⁹ Simultaneously, his meticulous description of these daily practices shines a light on the conditions of French society at the time. Nowadays, Dutch writer of historical novels Geert Mak uses the life of his family to discuss the social and spatial changes in Dutch society that took place in the twentieth century.²⁴⁰

3.1.2 Writing through: transcription as experimental practice

Transcribing, in the sense of writing another version, also points at the interactivity between different disciplines: a piece of music can be transcribed for another instrument, for instance, or literary scenes are presented in cinema. In such cases, the question remains what is kept from the original version, and what has been lost. A commonly heard remark about films based on novels is that the book was better than the film. Indeed, a transcription implies an interpretation by the transcriber, which excludes some aspects of the original in favour of others. Reflecting on the notion of transcription, writer Salman Rushdie states that the art of transcription lies in finding the "essence" of the original version, and developing a second version that, however different, embodies the "soul" of the first. For a successful transcription though, a good copy is not enough: the second version should be of value in itself, adding new qualities to the original. Rushdie extends the notion of transcription to a social level:

"As individuals, and as communities and nations, we are continuously busy to adapt ourselves . . . Like artistic adaptation or transcription, in order to succeed, the process of social, cultural, and individual adaptation should be free, and not fixed. Who sticks too rigidly to the original text, to the case that has to be transcribed, to the old behaviour, the past, is doomed to create something malfunctioning, an unhappy feeling, an alienation, a quarrel, a failure, a loss."²⁴¹

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When we regard transcription as a practice to transgress the boundaries of the disciplines and to explore the possibilities within its structure and content, we arrive at a number of experimental approaches in literature. Indeed, these works may be seen as transcriptions, *transgressing* the borders of the literary discipline. In some experimental literary practices, architecture has been a source of inspiration, not only as a subject, but also as a means to structure a narrative. In his novel *Life. A User's Manual (la vie mode d'emploi)*, Georges Perec uses the spatial structure of the apartment building as a framework instead of a chronological structure.²⁴² The literary constructions of James Joyce's writings, most notably the novel *Ulysses*, are known

239 Georges Perec, *La Vie mode d'emploi*, translated in English as *Life. A User's Manual*. See for a detailed discussion of this novel of Perec the dissertation of Manet van Montfrans: *Georges Perec, la Contrainte du reel*, Atlanta, Rodopi, Amsterdam 1999

240 Geert Mak, *De eeuw van mijn vader*. [My Father's Century] Atlas Publishers, Amsterdam/Antwerp 1999

241 Salman Rushdie, *Bewerking van boeken tot films is een doolhof van spiegels en façades* [Transcription from books to films is a labyrinth of mirrors and façades], NRC Handelsblad, *Opinie&debat*, March 7 2009, p. 2 (translation from Dutch kmh)

242 Georges Perec, *Life, a User's Manual* The Harvill Press, London, 1996 [La Vie mode d'emploi, 1978]

for their complicated spatiality, even compared by Jennifer Bloomer to the complex spatial constructions in Piranesi's etches.²⁴³ She describes the complexity of Joyce's novel *Finnegans Wake* as follows:

"Finnegans Wake is a monumental construction, a quasi three-dimensional text, and in its interwoven and colliding geometrics, its incorporation of familiar, old materials and entities and fragments, its various connections, and its ambiguous signification it contains an intricate architectonic that reinforces its identity with the city."²⁴⁴

Such structural experiments on the boundaries of architecture and literature indeed prove inspiring transgressions of disciplinary boundaries. Contemporary author Mark Z. Danielewski uses architecture as both the subject and the means of his experimental writing. His *House of Leaves* is constructed of a complex series of interrelated narratives and references, in which even the (graphic) space of the book itself plays a part. In this literary thriller, architecture might be regarded as the core of the novel: it structures the narrative, forms the construction, generates the tension, and the house at some point becomes the key protagonist, coming to life through its changing measurements, accommodating intrigues and secrets.²⁴⁵ The book narrates through the detailed description of the fictive film *The Navidson Records*, about the horrors of a haunted house. The book contains numerous layers: the story of the house and the Navidson family; the discussion of the (fictive) film by Navidson, representing this story; theoretical reflections of the (fictive) original author Zampáno, who tends to use fictive research statements made about the film, as well as a vast series of footnotes of a (fictive) reader/editor called Johnny. In the narrative, the first sign of the activity of the house is the sudden appearance of an indoor hallway, the dimensions of which seem larger than the size of the house would objectively allow. For the residents, the Navidson family, this is

... a physical reality the mind and body cannot accept.²⁴⁶

And it is this disturbing reality of hidden spaces that gradually expands to frightening proportions as the story goes along, until the house accommodates vast, dark spaces in which expeditors get lost after days of wandering. References are made to the spatial experiments of Escher and Piranesi as well as to mythical and literary labyrinths, which feature "impossible" spaces. In *The House of Leaves* the narrator reflects:

*What took place amounts to a spatial violation which has already been described in various ways – namely surprising, unsettling, disturbing but most of all uncanny.*²⁴⁷

Indeed, these experiments on the border of architecture and literature allow us to investigate the interactive roles of architecture and its users or inhabitants. In his analysis of Deleuze's

243 Jennifer Bloomer, *Architecture and the Text: The (s)cripts of Joyce and Piranesi*, Yale University Press, New Haven/London, 1993

244 Ibid. p.12

245 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, Doubleday/Transworld Publishers, London 2001 (Anchor, 2000)

246 Ibidem, p.30

247 Ibidem, p.24. See also Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny. essays in the modern unhomey*, MIT Press, 1994

literary references, Ronald Bogue discusses the notion "minor literature", which points at transgressing the boundaries of mainstream literature. The concept was used in the study that Deleuze, together with Felix Guattari, made on the work of the writer Franz Kafka. Minor literature is understood as a literature of small groups, often a specified cultural minority, which often comes together with a particular appropriation of language.²⁴⁸ Literature written in such a context, claims Deleuze, is particularly strong in revealing societal issues. This is indeed the case for Kafka, who, as Bogue argues after Deleuze, developed a particularly reductive vocabulary of Prague German.²⁴⁹ A similar experimental use of language, deliberate transformations of vocabulary, structure, rhythm and meaning can also be found in many literary works of the modern avant-garde. Indeed, minor literature may not only be understood as the literature of cultural and linguistic minorities, but also as a literature which entails an experimental use of language. As such, Deleuze's notion of minor literature can be seen as a theoretical concept showing the value of experimental practices, and relate them again to the social aspects of space. Bogue agrees with Deleuze that for the minor writer: "... expressions must break forms, mark new ruptures and branchings. A form being broken, reconstruct the content that will necessarily be in rupture with the order of things."²⁵⁰

Literary group Oulipo, which stands for "Ouvroir de la Littérature Potentielle", the workshop of potential literature, experimented with form and meaning of their texts in order to find new "potentialities". The idea of potentiality had to do with generating unforeseen possibilities, an *other* literature:

"Potentiality, more than a technique of composition, is a certain means of conceiving literature [which] opens onto a perfectly authentic modern realism. For reality never shows more than a part of itself, authorizing a thousand interpretations, significations and solutions, all equally probable."²⁵¹

Therefore, members of Oulipo, among which were Georges Perec, Italo Calvino and Raymond Queneau, explored the possibilities of new forms of literature. They studied and used rules and constraints in literature, such as fixed form poetry, methods of substitution, like the S+7 method, which substitutes letters for the 7th next letter in the alphabet; displacement techniques such as inversion; multiplication, which includes the use of rhyme and alliteration; or subtraction.²⁵² The latter technique, for instance, was used in Georges Perec's "lipogrammatic"

248 Franz Kafka, for instance, was a Czech Jew, with a specific cultural and linguistic background. Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Literature*, Routledge, New York / London 2003, pp. 91-114.

249 Bogue, 2003, p.102

250 Bogue, 2003, p.110, quoting from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka, Pour une littérature mineure* Paris 1975 / *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature* Minneapolis 1986.

251 Jacques Bens, "Queneau Oulipian", in: Warren F. Motte, *OULIPO, a primer of potential literature*, Dalkey Archive, Normal 1998 (1986), p.67

252 The writers of the Oulipo group frequently referred to Raymond Roussel, the French writer who experimented with rules and constraints in the early decades, for example in his novel, *Impressions d'Afrique* of 1910. He revealed his method in *Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres* [How I wrote some of my books] which appeared in 1935, two years after his death. Recently, Enrique Walker brought up his work again in the context of architecture, in the article "Under Constraint" in Michiel Riedijk (ed.) *Architecture as a Craft, Architecture, Drawing, model and position*, SUN Publishers, Amsterdam, 2010, pp. 25-33

novel *La Disparition* (translated as *A Void*): a novel written without using the letter “e”.²⁵³ Also spatial and mathematical constructions were used as generators of new literary forms. Perec’s novel *Life. A User’s Manual*, was written within a very strict framework of the 10x10-1 composition of the apartment building in which the narratives takes place.²⁵⁴ Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* also answer to a numeric construction. Raymond Queneau explored the effect of style by rewriting the same short story of a bus trip multiple times in various styles.²⁵⁵ Queneau’s *Cent Mille Milliard de Poèmes* was a work of poetry set up as a matrix, thereby containing an endless amount of “possible” poems. This “combinatory literature”²⁵⁶ thus offers multiple possibilities and in that sense corresponds to Oulipo’s collectively formulated approach, stating that the future can only be seen as “a bouquet of Imaginary Solutions – that is, of potentialities”.²⁵⁷ Queneau’s poem is composed precisely so that it can be read differently by each new reader. Thereby, the idea of potentiality also opens up the field of tension between reader and writer.

3.1.3 Writing another version: the role of the reader

As already came to the fore in the previous chapter regarding the notions of resonance-reverberation, Gaston Bachelard pointed at the active role of the reader : “The reader participates in the joy of creation . . . as though the reader were the writers ghost.”²⁵⁸ If transcription is understood as “to write a version of something”, or “to write in a different medium; transliterate”, this other version may also be seen as the version the reader produces by the very act of reading and interpreting.²⁵⁹ The potentiality that that Oulipo group refers to, may be understood in this light. In the novel *If on a Winters Night a Traveller*, Italo Calvino directly addresses the reader as “you”, constantly confronting the reader with his expectations caused by the narrative, and continuously questioning the line of thought of the reader. In this way, Calvino makes the reader reflect on the very act of reading.

253 A lipogram is a text from which one letter is left out. The idea has a long history: already in 1711, an attempt was made to translate the Iliad by Homer as a lipogram. Raymond Queneau, “Potential Literature”, in: Warren F. Motte, *OULIPO, a primer of potential literature*, Dalkey Archive, Normal 1998 (1986), p.67; Georges Perec, *La Disparition*, Denoël, Parijs, 1969, [translated into English as *A Void* by Gilbert Ardair, The Harvill Press 1995

254 ³² Sven Lütticken, *Oulipo en de roman: Queneau, Perec en Calvino [Oulipo and the Novel: Queneau, Perec and Calvino]*, in: Bzzletin 234, February 1997, Roussel, Perec, Queneau, BZZTôH, The Hague, 1997, pp. 29-31. For Perec’s methods, Lütticken refers to David Bellos, *Georges Perec, A Life in Words*, London, Harvill Press 1993

255 Raymond Queneau, *Exercices de Style*, 1947, [translated as *Exercises in Style*, by Barbara Wright, 1958, Dutch translation by Rudy Kousbroek, *Stijloefeningen*, De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam 1978

256 Jacques Roubaud, “Mathematics in the Method of Raymond Queneau” in: Warren F. Motte, *OULIPO, a primer of potential literature*, Dalkey Archive, Normal 1998 (1986), p.67

257 Warren F. Motte, *OULIPO, a primer of potential literature*, Dalkey Archive, Normal 1998 (1986), p.67

258 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston Mass., 1994 p.xxvi

259 *The Penguin Pocket English Dictionary*, Penguin Group, London 1990 [1985], p. 904, entry *transcribe*

*Who you are, Reader, your age, your status, profession, income – it would be indiscreet to ask. It’s your business, you’re on your own. What counts is the state of your spirit now, in the privacy of your home, as you try to re-establish perfect calm in order to sink again into the book; you stretch out your legs, you draw them back, you stretch them again. But something has changed since yesterday. Your reading is no longer solitary: you think of the Other Reader, who, at this same moment, is also opening the book; and there, the novel to be read is superimposed by a possible novel to be lived . . . This is how you have changed since yesterday, you who insisted you preferred a book, something solid, which lies before you, easily defined, enjoyed without risks, to a real-life experience, always elusive, discontinuous, debated . . . Then from the very first page you realize that the novel you are holding in your hands has nothing to do with the one you were reading yesterday . . .*²⁶⁰

At some point in the book, the reader becomes a protagonist. Being curious about a book, the “you” is made to arrange a meeting with a professor at a university. The reader thus becomes an active character, who is even given physical actions.

*You arrive punctually at the university, you pick your way past the young men and girls sitting at the steps, you wander bewildered among those austere walls . . . Reader, we are not sufficiently acquainted for me to know whether you move with indifferent assurance in a university or whether old traumas or pondered choices make a universe of pupils and teachers seem a nightmare to your sensitive and sensible soul.*²⁶¹

*The professor’s voice seems about to die away. You crane your neck, to make sure he is still there, beyond the bookcase-partition that separates him from your vision, but you are no longer able to glimpse him . . .*²⁶²

A similar role for the reader as an active participant is also present in the poem *Voor wie dit leest* by Dutch poet Leo Vroman. Here, the relation between reader and writer is presented as one of reciprocity: the reader, waking up the words from their sleep; the writer, wishing to be the page and to witness the effect his words may have on the reader.

*as it was only love that could make
the pencil move in my dreams
when I fell asleep on what seems
this poem now – so read it awake
as if I were under this page,
as if barred by these lines I could feel
your pain reach into my cage
to have and to heal.*²⁶³

260 Italo Calvino, *Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore*, Giulio Einaudi editore, Torino 1982, English translation by William Weaver: *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich / University of Michigan, 1981, p.32

261 Ibidem, p. 47

262 Ibidem, p. 70

263 Leo Vroman, “Voor wie dit leest”, originally published in Dutch in: *Leo Vroman, Gedichten, vroegere en latere*, 1949; translated from Dutch as “To whom this may concern” by the author and Peter Nijmeijer, in: James S. Holmes and William Jay Smith, *Dutch interior: postwar poetry of the Netherlands and Flanders*, Columbia University Press, New York Guildford, Surrey 1984, p.14

French literary theorist Paul Ricoeur writes about the narrative in novels that: “Finally, it is the reader who completes the work inasmuch as . . . the written work is a sketch for reading. Indeed, it consists of holes, lacunae, zones of indetermination, which . . . challenge the reader’s capacity to configure what the author seems to take malign delight in defiguring. . . . it is the reader, almost abandoned by the work, who carries the burden of emplotment.”²⁶⁴

In this fragment, Ricoeur refers to the extreme complexity of the narrative in James Joyce’s famous novel *Ulysses*. Some literary writers consciously challenge their readers to participate. Like Calvino, but in an entirely different manner, James Joyce asks his readers to actively participate. Jennifer Bloomer argues in her discussion of Joyce’s “scripts” that his composition, an almost spatial assemblage of fragments referring to each other, “forces an abandonment of the idea of the reader as a passive receptor. The reader must engage, work on, rewrite this text. The reader must be a writer . . . This reader-writer is a producer, an appropriator, a maker, an assembler.”²⁶⁵ Likewise, Michel de Certeau states that a text becomes “inhabitable, like a rented apartment. It transforms another person’s property into a space borrowed for a moment by a transient.”²⁶⁶ De Certeau argues that reading is not a passive state of being. On the contrary, it is an active participation, by means of which the reader is a co-producer of the text. While reading may seem a passive act, it has in fact:

“. . . all the characteristics of a silent production: the drift across the page, the metamorphosis of the text effected by the wandering eyes of the reader, the improvisation and expectation of meanings inferred from a few words, leaps over written spaces in an ephemeral dance . . . [The reader] insinuates into another person’s text the ruses of pleasure and appropriation: he poaches upon it, is transported into it, pluralizes himself in it . . . The thin film of writing becomes a movement of strata, a play of spaces. A different world (the reader’s) slips into the author’s place.”²⁶⁷

De Certeau points here at a number of actions that the reader undertakes upon the text: he appropriates it, makes it his own, he is transported into it. The text becomes a “play of spaces”. Thus, De Certeau argues that reading, like other everyday practices, is an act of production. The reader transforms codes and meanings by this appropriation.

If transcribing indeed implies an active role of the reader as a producer, a maker of the text, architectural transcription might direct us to a similar role for the user of space. Architectural design, then, does not offer one single narrative, but allows for different stories to happen, it allows for confrontations between spaces, users and events. Transcribing in architecture, then, could be a socially engaged form of experimentation, ultimately aimed at provoking new or other uses of space, at challenging the unexpected, at transgressing boundaries of the co-

264 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume I*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1990 [1984], p.77 [original in French: *Temps et Récit*, Editions du Seuil, Paris 1993]

265 Jennifer Bloomer, *Architecture and the Text: the (s)cripts of Joyce and Piranesi*, Yale University Press, New Haven/ London 1993, p.13

266 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988, p.xxi [1984, original version in French: *Arts de faire*, 1984], p. xxi

267 Ibidem, p.xxi

monly accepted. In this view, transcription provokes, rather than offering comfort, it searches the sublime, rather than the beautiful, and it points at difference, asking for an active participation of its reader or user.

3.2 TELLING PLACES: NARRATIVES AND SOCIAL PRACTICE

3.2.1 Social spatial practices

In the previous pages, I have distinguished three aspects of the notion transcription. First, I connected transcription to the *dynamic* character of literary writings on space. I have shown that in literature, space, particularly public urban space, is never neutral: it is the stage for social activities. Therefore, literature has the capacity to offer precise accounts of social processes, not only as vivid portraits of urban life, but also as “symptomatology” of social illness, to speak with Deleuze. Literature can provide a cure in the sense that it can offer alternatives, new directions for society. The second aspect of transcription I have brought to the fore is the “other version”, which, on the one hand has to do with transcriptions from one medium to another, but, on the other can be understood as an act of participation of the reader-user of the work: the reader, by his very act of reading, has a role in the production of the text. Third, I have discussed the *experimental* character of transcription. This points at experiments within the use of language, or within the production of text, but also at experiments regarding the structure of the novel, and its content. They explore the possibility for confrontations and conflicts, openings to include the unexpected. In the continuation of this chapter, I will bring to the fore how these three aspects of transcription can be “transcribed” to architecture. In other words, I will highlight how architecture is connected to social practices, stressing the role of the user of space in its production and experience; I will show the merit of experiment in architecture as a means to provoke confrontations between spaces, people and activity and to allow for the unexpected within architectural experience; and I will show how literary instruments such as perspective and narrative can offer a passage to new ways of living.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the concept of lived experience, and Henri Lefebvre’s contribution to the conceptualization of *lived* space. One of the key arguments that Lefebvre made regarding lived space was indeed that such space is by definition socially produced. Like the reader, who has a role in producing the (experience of) the text, it is the user, the inhabitant, the passer-by, who has a role in producing the lived experience of space. In other words, lived space exists precisely through the actions of its users, inhabitants and passers-by, it is dynamic and subject to change. It has ability to speak, as it were, to address the visitor,

user or inhabitant: “Representational space [*lived space*] is alive: it speaks.”²⁶⁸

For Lefebvre, society produces its own space, through its own means of production. Social practices and structures of power thus play a role in this production of social space, and become visible in the streets and public spaces of everyday life. By analysing the behaviour of people in public urban spaces, social patterns can be found. In this way, Lefebvre argues, “. . . social space works as a tool for the analysis of society”,²⁶⁹ or even, “space is social morphology”.²⁷⁰ In his earlier book *The Urban Revolution*, Lefebvre focuses specifically on urban society, claiming that the city is inextricably linked with social practices of everyday life²⁷¹. His hypothesis is that society will become completely urbanized. He believes that the transformations he perceives in the society of Western Europe in the late 1960s will lead to an ultimately urban society: a dominance of the city over the country. This urban society will lead to a new practice: the urban practice.²⁷² By this, he hints at a new mode of production: the citizen participating in the production of space. This production can also entail transgression of spatial and legal borders, as well as spatial violation, by means of which new rules, new spaces and new forms of social life are initiated. Here, Lefebvre foresees a change in power structures: it is not the institutions, the formal bodies of power, that write the laws and rules of society; rather, urban society is produced by people, in the streets. The street is seen by Lefebvre as the place where changes in society become apparent, society becomes produced and “inscribed” in the streets, and this has to do with the function of the street as a space for social interaction:

“Revolutionary events generally take place in the street. . . . The urban space of the street is a space for talk, given over as much to the exchange of words and signs as it is for the exchange of things. A place where speech becomes writing. A place where speech becomes ‘savage’, and, by escaping rules and institutions, inscribes itself on the walls.”²⁷³

Clearly, this interest in the streets as the place where societal changes are enforced by citizens, derived from the momentum in which Lefebvre’s argument should be placed: *The Urban Revolution* was published in France two years after the social events in Paris of 1968, when indeed the streets were the locus for social and political change. The “Right to the City” that Lefebvre advocates²⁷⁴ may be read as the right to the participant to transcribe – and thereby to produce new urban practices.

Similarly, Jane Jacobs referred to the power of the citizens in her critical comments on urban planning and economy in the 1960s and 1970s.²⁷⁵ She pointed out the importance of diversity in city life and stated that planners and politicians should pay more attention to everyday

268 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Blackwell Publishing, London, 1991 [*La Production d’espace*, Editions Anthropos, Paris 1974], p. 42

269 Ibidem, pp.33-34

270 Ibidem, p.94

271 Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/London 2003 [*La Révolution urbaine*, Editions Gallimard, Paris 1970]

272 Ibidem, p.5

273 Ibidem, p.19

274 Henri Lefebvre, “Right to the City”, in Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, translated and edited by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Blackwell Publishing, London 2006 [1996], pp.63-184

275 The most influential of her books is: Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Vintage Books New York, 1992, Original edition published by Random House, New York, 1961

practices that give shape to public life in the city, because: “The bureaucratized, simplified cities so dear to our present-day city planners and urban designers . . . run counter to the processes of city growth and economic development.”²⁷⁶

Even though their contributions to the urban debate date from a specific period, their insights are far from outdated. Referring to both Henri Lefebvre and Jane Jacobs, the contemporary urban theorist Edward Soja argues that they were right: the twenty-first century has indeed become the era of urban society, and therefore it is necessary to acknowledge and study the productive capacity of users.²⁷⁷ Soja illustrates his argument by referring to three levels of knowledge in Aristotle’s theory: *epistème* (the theoretical), *techné* (the technical) and *phronesis*, the practical wisdom.²⁷⁸ *Episteme* refers to knowledge in a scientific sense and relates to reasoning; *techné* refers to craftsmanship, and *phronesis* is a kind of knowledge derived from practice, from common sense, from everydayness. According to Soja, the knowledge level of *phronesis* is highly underestimated in spatial thought. Indeed, this is precisely the “wisdom” of everyday practices, at stake in Lefebvre’s *lived space* and in Soja’s own *Thirdspace*.²⁷⁹

In this respect, a reflection on the work of Michel de Certeau is appropriate. This French theorist in social sciences and literature has proposed a shift in thinking about everydayness: seeing everyday practices as valuable aspects of culture. Like Lefebvre, De Certeau is interested in the role of users, or consumers, the word De Certeau employs for the “dominated” groups²⁸⁰, in the production of culture. First, he makes a distinction between the “strategies” that those in power develop in order to organize and dominate society, and “tactics”, the ways of operating of the dominated groups. Such tactics can “use, manipulate, and divert”²⁸¹ the spaces that are produced and imposed by means of strategies. Everyday practices such as talking, reading, cooking and walking are, in his view, tactical. De Certeau argues that such practices have a much larger role in the production of society than is generally accounted for. It is through walking in the city, through the repetition of routes and rituals, through daily meetings, chats with neighbours or shop owners, that inhabitants live and *produce* the urban life:

“The ordinary practitioners of the city . . . walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers . . . whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it. . . . The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose

276 Jane Jacobs, *The Economy of Cities*, Penguin edition, 1972 [1969], p. 97

277 Edward Soja, *Thirdspace, journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1999 (1996)

278 Edward Soja, *Putting Cities First*, lecture at London School of Economics, London, December 5, 2006. The triad *Episteme*, *techné* and *phronesis* was introduced in Aristotle’s *The Nicomachean Ethics*. See for a discussion of these themes, Bent Flyvbjerg *Making Social Science Matter*, How social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again, Cambridge University Press, 2001

279 *Thirdspace* is a notion Edward Soja developed as a response to Lefebvre’s *lived space*. Soja defines Thirdspace as a space in-between: “a knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices.” Edward Soja, *Thirdspace, journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1999 (1996), p. 31. Soja’s idea of lived space / Thirdspace as a space between real and imagined will be further discussed in the Chapter Prescription.

280 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988 (1984), p. xi [L’invention du quotidien. Part 1. *Art de Faire*]

281 Ibidem, p. 30

a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other. . . . a *migrational* or metaphorical city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city.”²⁸²

De Certeau sets this urban life, generated by the patterns of its praxis, against the conceptual city as seen from above. As a model for the rational “Concept-City”, imposed by the ones in power, visible from above, De Certeau uses the view of Manhattan seen from the top of the former towers of the World Trade Center. In contrast to that bird’s-eye view, De Certeau points at the city as experienced from below: a complex and barely visible conglomeration of the patterns of its users, full of turns, rituals and narratives. He recognizes in this city a different kind of spatiality, which is not a geometrical, but an anthropological space in which poetic experience plays a part. Similar to the productive role of the reader in appropriating and “inhabiting” a text, De Certeau argues that the consumer actually “produces” through his everyday practices: “Spatial practices . . . secure the determining conditions of social life.”²⁸³

In order to analyse this neglected aspect of urban practices, De Certeau suggests we turn to stories. He argues that literature provides an extensive source for research, and states that the novel “has become the zoo of everyday practices since the establishment of modern science”.²⁸⁴ We can indeed find accounts of this “migrational and metaphorical city” in literature. The urban planner in György Konrád’s novel *The City Builder* is well aware of the false image of the Concept-City: he describes how a group of urban planners makes a tour by helicopter above the provincial town for which they are planning major interventions. Indeed, like De

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Certeau’s explanation of the Concept-City as seen from the top of the WTC in New York, here, the city is seen from the sky as a rational structure in which interventions can be made. While constructing their new, rationalized model of the city, however, the planners realize that in fact, the chaotic layer of spatial practices, that unreadable city full of trajectories, contradictions and multiple stories had its value:

*The dictator of perfect arches and angles vanished from our minds; we were careful now in putting our hand on the unaccustomed body of time and no longer wanted to imprint our thought patterns of its dense configurations. For though the city was at the mercy of our remodeling furor, and we could have imposed our simplistic solutions on the terrain, we were getting more and more anxious, and idly flapped about over this disconcerting model. Let’s face it: we liked this city; it resembled us, and the colored drawings of children on gray asphalt. We began to look into the labyrinthine streets and saw witty and mostly unorthodox solutions to tricky tasks, to which patient time had given its stamp . . . and that has come to resemble only itself. It was weathered, and profited from, the many gifts it has received – comely ones from men of talent, abominations from the unscrupulous. It also survived the marks of our bungled efforts, the decaying signs of would-be uniqueness, conflagrations, explosions. We watched a graceless community’s obstinate dialogue with its surroundings . . .*²⁸⁵

282 De Certeau, 1984, p.93

283 Ibidem, p.96

284 Ibidem, p.78

285 Originally written in Hungarian in 1969-1973 as *A városalapító*, but first published in Germany as: György Konrád, *Der Stadtgründer*, Paul List Verlag, München 1975. English translation by Ivan Sanders: György Konrád, *The City Builder*, The University of Michigan/ Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977, p.28.

Of course, Michel de Certeau is not the first to enter the field of social spatial practices, though for my argument he is the most relevant, because he investigates this field through literary means, as I will soon discuss in more detail. Indeed, De Certeau suggests that narrative can be of great scientific value for research on social spatial practices:

“Shouldn’t we recognize [the narrative’s] *scientific* legitimacy by assuming that . . . it cannot be, or has not been, eliminated from discourse, narrativity has a necessary function in it, and that *a theory of narration is indissociable from a theory of practices, as its condition as well as its production?* To do that would be to recognize the theoretical value of the novel . . .”²⁸⁶

The concept of narrative could be of great value if we are to see how a form of architectural ‘transcription’ could come about. This is not only because literary narratives frequently describe spatial practices, but also because of the role that stories play in the delimitation of space, in defining its boundaries. A story makes people identify with a place, just as the absence of stories leaves a space to neutrality.²⁸⁷

De Certeau distinguishes two roles for the story. First, it *finds*: it sets a field, it creates a stage on which actions can unfold. This field is by no means fixed and neutral. On the contrary, it can be “fragmented”, allowing different social groups to act upon it; “miniaturized”, offering not only an account of a large community but also individual stories or stories related to only small groups; and “polyvalent”, with many different voices and allowing multiple stories to coexist.²⁸⁸ Second, a story functions as a *bridge* and a *frontier*: it defines borders, delineates the field. By articulating the frontier, it can also be appropriated, connections are made between one side and the other. In this way it functions as a bridge, or again, as a passage.²⁸⁹ A story “establishes an itinerary (it ‘guides’) and it passes through (it ‘transgresses’)”.²⁹⁰ It can thus be seen as a journey, a transport from one place to the other, transgressing borders. De Certeau refers to the ancient Greek *metaphorai*, “means of transportation”. Indeed, if we look at the etymological origin of the word metaphor, we find that the first meaning is “to bring across”, indeed, a transportation, be it physically, in space, or figuratively, in speech. The current meaning of metaphor, a figure of speech in which a certain concept or idea is explained by its analogy with another, is thus also a form of transportation. “Stories,” says De Certeau, “whether everyday or literary, serve us as a means of mass transportation, as *metaphorai*.”²⁹¹ Space is thus

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286 De Certeau 1984, p. 78, original italics

287 I need to stress here, that I use another definition of space and place than De Certeau. De Certeau regards place (lieu) as something stable, which can be geometrically defined, and space (espace) as “a practiced place... composed of intersections of elements”, thus, made by practices, activity of users. (Ibidem, p. 117) I would argue precisely otherwise. Space, to me, is rather neutral and can be described by its spatial properties, whereas place is connected to identity: place consists not only of spatial properties, but also of social practices, stories, memories, etc. In that sense, I follow Edward S. Caseys account of place in *The Fate of Place*, as discussed in this work, and Marc Augé’s anthropological account of place as defined by history, identity and relations. (Marc Augé, *Non-Places. Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, Verso, London/New York, 1995 [*Non-lieux*, 1992])

288 De Certeau 1984, pp. 123-125

289 Ibidem, p.126

290 Ibidem, pp. 129

291 De Certau 1984, p. 155

part of a narration, but if indeed a story makes the reader transport from one place to another, *movement* is also part of a narration.

This aspect of movement is of crucial importance if we want to connect the notion of narrative to architecture, because it means that narrative is spatial, but also temporal. The events in a story unfold in space and time. In architectural practice, the temporal aspect is often forgotten. Strangely enough, the architect's involvement in a project does not reach much further than the day of the opening, while the life of the building or urban site starts after that: it changes in time, through use, activities, events. Spatial practices imply activity and movement, and thus time; lived experience is experience *in time*. According to Lefebvre, the contemporary focus on image has shifted the attention of architects and planners away from temporal experience, as the image "detaches the pure forms from its impure content – from lived time, everyday time . . ." ²⁹² As Lefebvre has explained, lived space "embraces loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time. Consequently, it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic." ²⁹³ Indeed, space changes, it is used, appropriated and transformed by everyday life. Space is thus "not a thing but rather a set of relations between things." ²⁹⁴ This relational aspect is important for our account of spaces and the role of the architect-writer. If space is indeed relational, we cannot define the task of architecture as to design a fixed space, in which all actions are pre-programmed. Rather, the task could be, as in a story, to found a field upon which actions and transformations can take place in time.

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3.2.2 Narrative: activity in space and time

By a further discussion of the concept of narrative, I hope to show how this notion can help to address the social, dynamic and participatory character of lived space. French author Paul Ricoeur has theorized the connection between the construction of a story and temporality in his study *Time and Narrative*. He explains how time and narration are inseparable. The world that is revealed by the story is in any event of a temporal character – simply because human experience is temporal. Ricoeur argues that:

"The world unfolded by every narrative work is always a temporal world. . . . Time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of the narrative; narrative in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience." ²⁹⁵

292 Lefebvre 1991 [1974], p.95

293 Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space*, Blackwell Publishing, London, 1991 [*La Production d'espace*, Editions Anthropos, Paris 1974], p.42

294 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p.83

295 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume I*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1990 (1984), p.3 [original in French: *Temps et Récit*, Editions du Seuil, Paris 1993]

Ricoeur goes back to Aristotle's *Poetics* to study the concept of emplotment. The simple definition that Ricoeur derives from this study is that narrative is the organization of events. However, within this definition, a complex play of mimesis is at stake: a narration can indeed be seen as a mimesis (an imitation or representation) of human action. Even if every story has its originality, it is also connected to traditions in the way stories are constructed and told. In order to be understood, a story needs a certain extent of familiarity. Ricoeur distinguishes three forms of mimesis in narration: a configurational mimesis, connected to the structure of action; a mediating mimesis between the different factors that constitute a story; and an intersecting mimesis, concerning the point at which the world of the writer and that of the reader intersect. The first aspect, the configuration of human action, relates to structure, symbol and time. Narrative can indeed structure the sequence of actions in various ways. Ricoeur speaks of a "syntagmatic order" ²⁹⁶ in the organization of events. Then there is the role of signs and symbols, a narration of human action can only be understood if the reader is familiar with the culturally defined context: "Human action can be narrated . . . because it is always already articulated by signs, rules and norms. It is always already symbolically mediated." ²⁹⁷ The temporal aspect of the narrative concerns the way the temporal dimensions of past, future and present all come together in the present of the narration. Referring to Heidegger's notion of *Zeitlichkeit* (temporality), Ricoeur explains how "the words 'future', 'past' and 'present' disappear, and time itself figures as the exploded unity of the three temporal ekstases." ²⁹⁸ The mimesis of action thus implies a "preunderstanding of what human acting is, in its semantic, in its symbolic system, in its temporality" ²⁹⁹ It is such pre-understanding of both writer and reader that allows a story to be told and understood.

The second mimesis that Ricoeur discusses is the mediating role of the plot. A narrative mediates at different levels: between the separate events and the story as a whole; between heterogeneous factors such as "agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results"; ³⁰⁰ between different temporal characteristics; between the intellectual and the intuitive. The third aspect of mimesis brings us back to the active role of the reader in narrative: this is the intersection between the imagined world of the writer and the real world of the reader. It is the reader who finally, through the act of reading, connects the different details of the story and understands it as a whole. In reading, he "takes up and fulfils the configurational act" and "actualizes its capacity to be followed." ³⁰¹ Here, we arrive again at the interactive relationship between writer and reader, and the reader's active participation in the story. If we follow De Certeau's ideas on the role of the story and Ricoeur's threefold analysis of narrative, we can transcribe some characteristics of these literary concepts to the field of architecture. If we indeed see architecture as dynamic, rather than static, as social, rather than formal, and as participatory, rather than imposing, a "narrative" approach to architecture can offer a passage to explore its relation to human action and temporality. If the role of the story, accord-

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296 Ibidem, p.56

297 Ibidem, p. 57

298 Ibidem, p.61. Here Ricoeur refers to Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit (Being and Time)* and the concepts of *Innerzeitlichkeit* (within-time-ness) and *Zeitlichkeit* (temporality).

299 Ibidem. p.64

300 Ibidem , p 65-66

301 Ibidem, p.76

ing to De Certeau, is to set a field for human action and to function as a bridge and frontier, we might state that the task of a narrative architecture would be to offer a spatial field that invites human actions to take place, and that through this field, borders can be defined as well as transgressed. A narrative architecture, if we follow the line to Ricoeur, does not only compose a structure in which human action can take place, but it also includes symbolic and temporal features. The symbolic or representational dimension of architecture has been well discussed, and it is not my intention in this work to repeat or extend this discussion.³⁰² My focus is on the temporal features of the architectural narrative. Can architecture, like narrative, bring together past, future and presence in a moment of architectural experience? Can architecture be designed to give space to different temporal experiences, and simultaneously generate memories and evoke imaginations? Analogous to Ricoeur's second aspect of mimesis, architecture can be seen as a mediator between these different temporal dimensions. Also, the architectural project mediates between the parts and the whole, between its details and the totality of its appearance. Like the narrative, it mediates between a large number of heterogeneous factors, such as its programmatic and functional demands, structure, climate, materiality, aesthetics and so forth. And, as Ricoeur suggests for the role of a narrative, it mediates between the intuitive and the intellectual. The last aspect of Ricoeur's study of mimesis in narrative concerns the interactivity between writer and reader. Likewise, in architecture, the participation of the user, inhabitant or perceiver is at stake. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is the use, appropriation and even violence taking place within architectural space that essentially produces architectural experience. We should therefore investigate how the concept of narrative can be used in architecture, allowing a more intense experience of human action, space and time.

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Sociologist Richard Sennett has proposed to regard space in a narrative sense, precisely because in that way issues of temporality and human action can be addressed:

"Spaces can become full of time when they permit certain properties of narrative to operate in everyday life. . . . The experience of [spatial] elements as narrative scenes . . . embodies human cultural values."³⁰³ Sennett defines narrative space as a *dynamic* space in which the movement of time plays a role. In narrative space, multiple stories and activities can take place, there is room for surprise. "How, then," Sennett wonders, "does a planner invent ambiguity and the possibility of surprise? . . . To create a sense of beginning, a radical change will have to occur in the framework of urban design."³⁰⁴ Sennett indeed calls for a change in approach of the designing disciplines, in order to arrive at narrative qualities of space: spaces that can function as a field on which actions can take place, spaces that define borders and provoke transgressions, places that offer multiple stories, various uses, change and surprise. In Sennett's view,

³⁰² Especially when dealing with the public sphere, the aspect of representation remains a core issue for architects. We have discussed the subject in our introduction of *Architectural Positions, Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere*, SUN Publishers, Nijmegen/Amsterdam 2009, pp. 17-45 and pp.165-169. However, our discussion only briefly touched upon a few aspects. The list of sources considering architectural representation is too extensive to name here. Ricoeur's account of sign, symbol and representation has largely been influenced by Roland Barthes, and Ernst Cassirer. Valuable accounts of the representation of space have been given by, among others, Henri Lefebvre, and the Italian semiotician Umberto Eco.

³⁰³ Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye. The Design and Social Life of Cities*. W.W. Norton&Co., London 1992 [1990], p. 190

³⁰⁴ Ibidem, p. 196

the designer should create possibilities rather than fixed patterns:

"To permit space to become thus encoded with time, the urbanist has to design weak borders rather than strong walls. . . . An architect seeking to create a building possessed on narrative power would seek one whose forms were capable of serving many programs."³⁰⁵

Sennett also speaks of the necessity to create a sense of beginning. This sense of beginning has to do with the role of time in narrative:

". . . time is endowed with the possibilities of the unexpected, the possibilities of change . . . In a novel the beginning erases and effaces; space also comes to life in the present tense by being used to erase and efface – by acts of displacement."³⁰⁶

Sennett compares "character" in urban space to the character in a novel, which "develops through displacements which encounter resistance".³⁰⁷ For Sennett, narrative space is thus a dynamic space, in which unexpected activities can take place, and in which time manifests itself, through the experience of the present, in different dimensions. An answer to Richard Sennett's quest for a new design approach, which offers "narrative space" in which ambiguity and surprise can play a part, may be provided by a number of architectural perspectives, which regard architecture as a dynamic notion, providing room for multiple narratives to unfold.

3.2.3 Narrative space: architectural perspectives

How, then, can architects take into account these aspects of transcription? How can they provide a spatial setting for multiple events and narratives to unfold? How can architecture, which generally speaking puts physical material in place, thus solidifying rather than generating movement, play a part in the dynamics of city life? How can an architect define space and simultaneously provide possibilities for the users to "co-produce"? And how can transcription as an experimental practice help to explore the potentiality of architectural design? If transcription is an essentially dynamic notion, a dynamic definition of architecture should address aspects of use and activity. Such concerns have indeed been important for a number of architects, especially since the late 1960s. Around 1960, an international group of young architects known as Team 10, including Alison and Peter Smithson, Aldo van Eyck and Georges Candilis, reclaimed attention for the social practices of everyday life.³⁰⁸ Their designs made use of studies of behavioural patterns of everyday life. Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger and Danish architect and planner Jan Gehl were among those arguing for more attention to

³⁰⁵ Ibidem, p. 196

³⁰⁶ Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye. The Design and Social Life of Cities*. W.W. Norton&Co., London 1992 [1990], p. 195-196

³⁰⁷ Ibidem, p. 197

³⁰⁸ *Architectural Positions. Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere*, Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (eds.), SUN Publishers, Amsterdam 2009, pp. 38-39. For a closer discussion of this paradigm shift in architectural thinking, see also Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel, *Team 10, 1953-1981. In Search of a Utopia of the Present*. NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2005.

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be paid to the behavioural aspects in design, bringing knowledge from the fields of cognitive and behavioural psychology into the architectural debate. Likewise, Christopher Alexander considered the relation between architectural spaces and practices of everyday life in his architectural theory of behavioural patterns.³⁰⁹ In the Netherlands, architects and urban planners searched for new models in which the social aspect of the urban environment was emphasized, in reaction to rationalized modern planning. Dutch architects such as Herman Hertzberger, Piet Blom and Aldo van Eyck strived for a more social approach to housing and urban space. New housing areas with a strong focus on collective, pedestrian space and neighbourhood structures were for example the *Cul-de-Sac* housing estates in the Netherlands.³¹⁰ John Habraken provided a theoretical framework with his differentiation between “support” and “infill”.³¹¹ In his view, architects and planners were first and foremost responsible for providing a supportive built structure, flexible enough to allow different infills by inhabitants. His was a bottom-up approach in which inhabitants would have a say in the design of their living environment. Professor of architecture Lars Lerup was also interested in the influence of user’s practices on the built environment. He has studied the interactions between the social and the physical world, stating that people are “active individuals who in their approach to things produce meaning”.³¹² Like De Certeau, he turns to the act of reading to explain how spatial relations can be analysed:

“Structures of meaning may be uncovered in reading. I am of course suggesting that designed objects and whole settings can be read as if they were a text. Reading the physical setting in the light of accurately observed behavior . . . is thus a technique to simulate for the reader the interaction between people and their setting.”³¹³

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The interactive relationship between writer and reader, or: between architect and user/perceiver has also been investigated by a number of architects such as Bernard Tschumi, Peter Eisenman and Daniel Libeskind, who were interested in an experimental approach to architecture, in which the process itself plays an important role. Their work relates to the aspect of transcription I have called “writing through”. They criticize mainstream architecture for its formality and its affirmative attitude concerning functional and aesthetic demands. Instead of comfort, stability and stylistic clarity, these architects set out to search for the dynamic in architecture, looking for spaces that can take up various, even contradicting programmes. They search for the dynamic in architecture, and aim for spaces that can take up various

309 Christopher Alexander, *A Pattern Language*. Oxford University Press, New York 1977. See also: *Architectural Positions. Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere*, Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (eds.), SUN Publishers, Amsterdam/Nijmegen 2009, p. 114

310 For a Dutch perspective on social urban planning concepts, see: Martien de Vletter, *The Critical Seventies, Architecture and Urban Planning in the Netherlands in 1968-1982*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2004. The publication coincided with the exhibition *Cul-de-Sacs and conservation Pits. The Critical Seventies*, in the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam in 2004.

311 John Habraken, *De dragers en de mensen, Het einde van de massawoningbouw*. Scheltema en Holkema, Amsterdam, 1962, English edition: *Supports: an Alternate to Mass Housing*. The Urban International Press, Gateshead, UK 2000 (reprint of the 1972 edition)

312 Lars Lerup, *Building the Unfinished. Architecture and Human Actions*, Sage publications, Beverly Hills / London, 1977, p.19

313 Ibidem, p.27

programmes. They search for an architecture that provokes social interactions, events, intense experiences. They are interested in time, change and instability, and consider architecture as a process rather than as a fixed object. Their work is transdisciplinary, in that they employ literary references, but also explore other fields such as philosophy, the social sciences and cinema.

In his many writings, Bernard Tschumi has expressed his concern about the superficial image-culture of contemporary architecture. According to Tschumi, architects concentrate too much on appearance, neglecting the role of architecture in reflecting upon and accommodating social issues. “Indeed,” states Tschumi, “if most of architecture has become surface, applied decoration, superficiality, paper architecture . . . how can architecture remain a means by which society explores new territories, develops new knowledge?”³¹⁴ Tschumi looked with interest at postmodern experiments with linguistics and architecture, which, in his opinion, remained too narrow, as they concentrated on only one aspect, thereby underestimating the complexity of architecture: “The multiplicity of heterogeneous discourses, the constant interaction between movement, sensual experience, and conceptual acrobatics.”³¹⁵ Without doubt, a source of inspiration must have been the explorations of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, who were among the first to leave behind the restraints of modernist architectural dogmas and start to look for a connection of architecture with everyday life. Their *Learning from Las Vegas*, which called attention to the imagery of popular culture, was an eye-opener for many architects.³¹⁶ Venturi’s earlier book, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, provided a sharp critique of the established architecture at the time, pointing at the confusing, ambiguous aspects of architecture as the core of the discipline.³¹⁷ This focus on contradiction and complexity was a welcome alternative to the stylistic dogmas that mainstream modernist architecture had become associated with. Interestingly enough, Venturi does not present these themes as “new”; on the contrary, he uses architecture of all times to illustrate his argument. The complexity of Baroque churches is as relevant to him as Edwin Lutyens’ manor houses in Great Britain, as well as modern works by Le Corbusier and Aalto, in whose work he discovers tensions between different geometries, between plan and section, between modern techniques and vernacular references. The key argument for Venturi is that architecture cannot be reductive: it always consists of multiple layers, which can even contradict each other.

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Venturi’s vision on architecture as a discipline of double meanings, of contrasts between interior and exterior, of tension between the parts and the “difficult whole”, provided fruitful insights for further architectural explorations. Alberto Perez-Gomez, when reflecting on the

314 Bernard Tschumi, “Six Concepts”, in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts / London, 1996, pp. 236-237, originally written as a lecture at Columbia University in February 1991

315 Bernard Tschumi, “Architecture and Limits”, in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts / London, 1996, p. 177

316 *Learning from Las Vegas* was first published as an article in *Architectural Forum*, No. 2, 1968, pp.36-42.

317 Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, The Museum of Modern Art Papers on Architecture, New York / Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago, 1966 (used version: reprint of the second edition 1977, New York 1992).

task of architecture to engage aspects of lived experience and time in architecture, stated that: “The main concern of any generative theory of architecture is . . . to find appropriate language (in the form of stories) capable of modulating intended actions (projects) in view of ethical imperatives, always specific to each task at hand. The practice that emerges from such a theory can never be an instrumental application, but rather appears as a verb, as a process that is never neutral and should be valorised, a process that in fact erodes the boundaries between the artistic disciplines concerned with space.”³¹⁸

Indeed, the “transcriptive” approach, as I call it, is without exception trans-disciplinary. This seems self-evident, considering the context of this research, but I wish to stress this point here, because precisely the concept of transcription offers the possibility to link up with other disciplines and use their instruments to involved lived practices in architecture. Architects explicitly search for connections with other fields, and not only the literary. Both Bernard Tschumi and Raoul Bunschoten turn, for example, to cinema to find techniques of framing and sequences for their design works. I will discuss the work of Tschumi in more detail in the last part of this chapter. Dutch architect Raoul Bunschoten, with his London-based practice CHORA, defines scenarios as “narratives of urban possibilities, alternative realities, alternative practices”.³¹⁹ In the view of Bunschoten, scenarios can be generated by the use of literary elements such as authors, actors, agents and angels. It is through interaction and conflict that such elements can evoke new uses of space. Peter Eisenman has drawn close connections with philosophers to find new ways in architecture, while illustrating his ideas about dislocation through examples from cinema.³²⁰ Indeed, in the work of these architects, the borders
116 between disciplines seem to merge. In this work, I have chosen to focus predominantly on the role of literature as the most constituting discipline of the transcriptive approach. Literature, as we stated in *OASE*, offers:

“an alternative to the narrow concerns of functional and technological appropriateness that architects find themselves confronted with. Rather than explaining the world as governed by cause and effect and by measurable or predictable requirements, literary works show their readers the contradictory and complicated nature of human endeavours.”³²¹

One of the fundamental differences between architecture and literature is that architecture, in general, is projective, forward looking, and affirmative regarding programmatic and functional demands. Literature, on the contrary, is essentially questioning. It addresses existential themes regarding life, death, pain, love, grief, fear, the passage of time. Rather than comfort, it offers confusion and contradiction. According to Wim Cuyvers, whose architectural transcriptions were discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the real merit of using literature lays in

318 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, “Phenomenology and virtual space-alternative tactics for architectural practice”, in *OASE 58, The Visible and the Invisible*, SUN publishers, Nijmegen/Amsterdam 2002, pp 35-55

319 Raoul Bunschoten/CHORA, *Urban Flotsam*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam

320 For example, Eisenman speaks of the different time-frames which are superimposed in David Lynch’s film *Blue Velvet*. Peter Eisenman, “Architecture as a second language: the texts of between”, in: Peter Eisenman, *INSIDE OUT. Selected Writings 1963-1988*, Yale University Press, New Haven/ London, 2004, p. 229.

321 Christoph Grafe, Klaske Havik, and Madeleine Maaskant, editorial *OASE 70 Architecture&Literature Reflections / Imaginations*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2006, p. 6

the sensibilities and themes that literature can address.³²² Literature thus offers the themes and sensibilities that architecture often seems to lack. Simultaneously, it offers productive parallels between the writing of literature and the process of designing architecture. The concepts of narrative, perspective and character have been used in architectural projects, and experimental writing practices have shown new ways for experiment in architecture.

The Belgian architect Wim Cuyvers has undertaken various attempts at transcribing literary texts into architectural works. His motivation for these transcriptions derived from the observation that architecture, other than literature, avoids addressing existential questions. In novels, questions of life, death, decay, conflict and love are omnipresent, while architecture in general limits itself to offering comfort. Cuyvers wonders

“why architecture should not make full use of the means at its disposal: spaces that intensify confrontations, spaces that simultaneously offer contradictory insights and overviews, spaces that are reflective and encourage reflection, spaces that throw light on realities, spaces that impel and oppress, chasms and menace. Instead of this, architecture has collaborated in establishing power, in enforcing hygiene; it has helped to regulate smooth circulation and has installed controls and checks.”³²³

Cuyvers’ architectural transcriptions of novels are comparable with the writing of a scenario for a film based on a novel. Stories are literally put in scene, character traits used to characterize spaces, the relations between spaces are taken from books, aiming, by these means, to pursue “a heightened confrontation in order to break through the economically driven logic”.³²⁴ Other methods of architectural transcription that Cuyvers has employed are the construction of literary spaces and using themes from a novel in an architectural work. He
117 concludes, however, that these methods of transcribing have never been completely successful – they often remained too explicit. The true merit of literary inspiration for architects, states Cuyvers, is to understand the “other” side; to transgress the boundaries of the discipline; to look from the perspective of the ‘other’, the one in need rather than the architect or the mere client searching for comfort; and to offer spaces that can be appropriated. According to Cuyvers, what literature has to offer is that reading becomes “another writing”,³²⁵ in other words, the reader plays a role in the interpretation, even the production, of the text. In architecture, then, designing “stops”: architecture becomes a reading of space, allowing multiple interpretations, rather than a finished product; the architect offers spaces to be appropriated, to be used and confronted by their users.

Daniel Libeskind is one of the architects who have been intrigued by experimental writing processes and who have explored such literary interests in their projects. He has often compared architecture to language and in his projects – written, drawn or built – he has investigated the possibilities that a literary approach has to offer to architecture.

322 Grafe, Havik & Maaskant, editorial *OASE 70 Architecture&Literature Reflections / Imaginations*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2006, p. 6, Wim Cuyvers, “From the Dream of the Novel Turned to Stone to the Acknowledgement of Public Space”, *OASE 70 Architecture&Literature Reflections / Imaginations*, pp. 20-29

323 Wim Cuyvers, “From the Dream of the Novel Turned to Stone to the Acknowledgement of Public Space”, *OASE 70 Architecture&Literature Reflections / Imaginations*, p. 22

324 Ibidem, p. 23

325 Interview with Wim Cuyvers, November 4, 2005, Jan van Eyck Academy Maastricht.

An early transcriptive project by Daniel Libeskind concerns the Chamber Works, a series of drawings based on themes of Heraclites, made in 1983. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclites (500 AD) is known for his aphorisms, the most famous of which is “panta rhei”: everything flows. Heraclites compares the state of being with the flow of the river, which is unique and unrepeatable.³²⁶ Libeskind’s architectural drawings can be seen as interdisciplinary transcriptions: the meditations on the texts concern their appropriateness for architecture, the interpretations are then transcribed to an architectural medium: drawing on paper. The drawings do not represent buildings, they are works on their own, offering connections, rhythms, pause or speed, paths and spaces on paper. Another of Heraclites’ aphorisms, which comes back in the work of Libeskind, is that beginning and end are connected on the same circle. In his 1991 text “Three Lessons in Architecture”, Daniel Libeskind describes the project for a “machine”, which departed from this idea of a circular connection between end and beginning, explicitly draws a connection between architecture and moments of reading, remembering and writing.³²⁷ Explaining his project for a handcrafted ‘machine’ that addressed these aspects of architecture, Libeskind emphasizes the need for a participatory architecture: one in which the experience of the making, rather than the object itself, plays a central role. As a theoretical project, Libeskind developed a three-fold “machine”, totally handcrafted in wood, metal and graphite and rope. It processes eight words, including spirit, being, power and idea, in a complicated machine, containing a reading, remembering and writing part. Reading is described by Libeskind as an “experimental state” in which the architect searches for a deep understanding of craftsmanship, the very process of building. With the writing of architecture, Libeskind aimed at a process “to industrialise the poetics of architecture and to offer architecture as a sacrifice to its own possibilities of making a text”.³²⁸ The idea of a writing machine also appears in Deleuze and Guattari’s study of Kafka, as a “machine that makes things happen”.³²⁹ For his particular “writing architecture” machine, Libeskind refers to experimental writers such as Raymond Roussel, who has been of great influence of the Oulipo movement. Libeskind owes to Roussel the dynamic conception of the writing machine as something “unstable”, linking totally different aspects “in an unpredictable rationalisation of place, name, person”.³³⁰ The machine can indeed be regarded as a transcriptive exercise in the sense of “writing through”: an experiment concerning the process of the making.

326 J.H. Croon, A.R.A. van Aken, *De antieke beschaving in hoofdlijnen*, Meulenhof Educatief, Amsterdam 1981, p. 115; Jan Bor and Errit Petersma (eds.), *De verbeelding van het denken*, Contact Publishers, Amsterdam Antwerp 1995, p.18

327 Daniel Libeskind, “Three Lessons in Architecture”. in: *Architectural Monographs No16, Daniel Libeskind. Countersign*. Academy Editions, London 1991, pp.37-61, the project Three lessons in Architecture was exhibited in Modena, Italy in 1986; an excerpt of this text has also been published in *Architectural Positions. Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere*, Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (eds.), SUN Publishers, Amsterdam 2009, pp.188-195

328 Daniel Libeskind, “Three Lessons in Architecture”. in: *Architectural Monographs No16, Daniel Libeskind. Countersign*. Academy Editions, London 1991, p. 43

329 Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Literature*, Routledge, New York / London 2003, pp 187-192

330 Daniel Libeskind, “Three Lessons in Architecture”. in: *Architectural Monographs No16, Daniel Libeskind. Countersign*. Academy Editions, London 1991, text of project.

Libeskind’s project for the Jewish Museum in Berlin (2001) was in another way a result of his explorations on the boundaries between architecture and literary experiment. In this project, the very plan of the building came out of a narrative: the lines are a literal transcription of the lines that Libeskind drew on the city map of Berlin, connecting the former residences of Jews who had been killed in the Second World War. The interior of the museum continues these intersecting lines in the narrow strips of windows and the line on the ceiling. On top of this layer, another layer of “voids” is projected, expressing the emptiness of the non-graspable history. A long corridor leads to a heavy door, which opens to a cold, high space, in which the only light comes from the tiny strip of open air high above. It is a space of power and fear, a space in which different stories come together, in which the sudden cold and loneliness evoke an intense experience that unites knowing with the impossibility to understand. It can be argued that the transcription of the intersecting lines is too direct, too literal. However, with the voids, Libeskind has created “narrative spaces”, which speak as much as they are silent.

Precisely the possibility of architecture to address the theme of “absence” is at the core of the investigations of architect Peter Eisenman. “If architecture is primarily presence – materiality, brick, and mortar,” states Eisenman, “then otherness or secondarity would be *trace*, as the presence of absence.”³³¹ Eisenman argues that aspects of otherness or absence, aspects that indeed exceed the common conditions of architecture such as function and style, can be found in textuality. A text, according to Eisenman, always refers to something other than itself. This is because a text can describe an object or situation outside the text itself. Also, a text, especially a literary narrative, is interpreted by the reader. Therefore, there is not only one way to read and understand a text: it is open to multiple interpretations. For Eisenman, text is thus dynamic and multivocal: “It is not a stable object but a process, a transgressive activity which disperses the author as the centre, limit and guarantor of truth.”³³² His ideas on textuality have largely been influenced by the philosophical discourse of deconstruction, especially by the contribution of Jacques Derrida,³³³ who sees writing as an essentially instable process. If writing is a process, then a conflict arises when a text is presented as a finished object. In architecture, Eisenman stresses the factor of temporality. A building, through its physical presence, seems to be located in only one specific place and one specific time. Eisenman is interested in bringing together different experiences of time. As Paul Ricoeur suggested in *Time and Narrative*, a text can mediate between different temporal dimensions, and Eisenman is in search of an architecture that can situate itself as a text “between” different times and places: if architecture is no longer seen as the now, but as a state ‘between’, then architecture can dislocate

331 Peter Eisenman, “EN TERROR FIRMA. In trails of grotexes”, in: Kate Nessbitt (ed.), *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: an Anthology of Architecture Theory 1965-1995*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 1996, p.569

332 Peter Eisenman, “Architecture as a second language: the texts of between”, in: Peter Eisenman, *INSIDE OUT. Selected Writings 1963-1988*, Yale University Press, New Haven/ London, 2004, p. 227. Also published in *RE: WORKING EISENMAN*, Academy Editions London/ Ernst&Sohn Berlin, 1993, pp.19-23

333 Peter Eisenman has frequently exchanged thoughts with Jacques Derrida about language, textuality and architecture in the light of Derrida’s theory of deconstruction. *Choral Work* was a joint project of the philosopher and the architect. Some of the correspondence between Eisenman and Derrida has been published in: *RE: WORKING EISENMAN*, Academy Editions London/ Ernst&Sohn Berlin 1993

“not only the memory of internal time but all aspects of presence, origin, place, scale and so forth”.³³⁴ The concept of “dislocation” is important to Eisenman’s quest to find an architecture beyond its common presence: an architecture that indeed mediates between past, future and present, that can be at once presence and absence, that leaves traces open between author and reader, that allows multiple meanings. Dislocation does not imply denying that architecture has a place and time, that it functions and offers shelter. On the contrary, dislocating architecture in the view of Eisenman can respond to the primary needs a building has to fulfil, but simultaneously “speak of something else”.³³⁵

In his design work, Eisenman has explored many ways to achieve such dislocation in architecture. His early houses (House I-VI) were experiments that questioned the common roles of architectural elements such as walls and columns. These early houses were not conceived with the idea of textuality in mind, but retrospectively, Eisenman sees them as part of the same search: “One can find this inclination toward fiction already operating in these houses . . . [they] were in fact . . . fictionalizations, misreadings, creations of unreal histories.”³³⁶ Later, Eisenman placed such aspects as the fictional and textuality at the core of his work. The project *Choral Work*, carried out in 1985 together with Jacques Derrida, was an attempt to explicitly explore the parallels between architecture and deconstructivist ideas on textuality. Based on Derrida’s interest in Plato’s concept of *chora*, the hardly definable “space” that comes before everything else, that “gives place”, a design was made for a small garden within Tschumi’s Parc de la Villette. The collaboration was not successful in every respect, and was criticized for being too blunt an interpretation of philosophical themes, which caused Derrida to distance himself from further exchanges with Eisenman. In later projects, Eisenman continued to make designs that deliberately allow other readings. These “misreadings”, as Eisenman calls them, are provoked by “traces” in the design: traces of theories, of other architectural works, or distorted narratives of the history of the site. Temporality continues to play an important role. In the text “Time Warps”, written in 1999, Eisenman reflects on the issue of temporality in architecture in relation to his design for the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin (realized in 2005).³³⁷ Instead of representing a memory that is too big to grasp, Eisenman proposes to deal with the heavy load of memory by offering an immediate experience of the present: it is indeed through that immediate experience that associations and memories with other times can be evoked.³³⁸ The wide maze of concrete blocks is accessible to the visitors, but functions as a labyrinth in which the orientation of the visitor becomes confused, despite the orthogonality of the grid. The temporal and spatial experience of being in this concrete maze

334 Peter Eisenman, “Architecture as a second language: the texts of between”, in: Peter Eisenman, *INSIDE OUT. Selected Writings 1963-1988*, Yale University Press, New Haven/ London, 2004, p. 229.

335 Ibidem, p.233

336 Peter Eisenman, “Misreading Peter Eisenman”, in: Peter Eisenman, *INSIDE OUT. Selected Writings 1963-1988*, Yale University Press, New Haven/ London, 2004, p. 224.

337 Peter Eisenman, “Time Warps: the Monument”, in: Cynthia C. Davidson (ed.), *Anytime*, MIT press, Cambridge, Mass., 1999, pp.250-257; republished in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, Hans Teerds, *Architectural Positions. Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere*, SUN Publishers, Amsterdam 2009, pp. 242-247

338 See also Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, Hans Teerds, introduction to the chapter “Temporalities”, *Architectural Positions. Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere*, SUN Publishers, Amsterdam 2009, p. 223-225

forces the visitor to physically encounter a sense of being lost. “In this context,” states Eisenman, “there is no nostalgia, no memory of the past, only the living memory of the individual experience in the monument. . . . This feeling of being lost is a disjunction in time.”³³⁹ An architectural work, according to Eisenman, Cuyvers or Libeskind, does not represent an ending, a final stage, but rather brings different temporalities together – in that sense resembling the narrative.

339 Peter Eisenman, “Time Warps: the Monument”, in: Cynthia C. Davidson (ed.), *Anytime*, MIT press, Cambridge, Mass., 1999, pp.250-257; republished in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, Hans Teerds, *Architectural Positions. Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere*, SUN Publishers, Amsterdam 2009, p. 245

3.3 ARCHITECTURAL TRANSCRIPTION

3.3.1 Bernard Tschumi: theoretical transcriptions

I have chosen to devote special attention to the work of architect Bernard Tschumi in illustrating what a transcriptive approach to architecture can entail. While the architects I have mentioned above, such as Libeskind, Eisenman, Bunschoten and Cuyvers, have indeed frequently used aspects of “transcription” in their work, Bernard Tschumi, in his written as well as architectural work, has applied a transcriptive approach on different levels. First, Bernard Tschumi’s explorations show a deep interest in the social relations that architecture can make possible. The field of tension between architecture and the activities it may allow or provoke is a central theme in both his texts and his design projects. Second, Tschumi’s approach is an experimental one, continuously questioning the limits of the field of architecture. He uses concepts from other disciplines such as literature and cinema in order to arrive at new architectural perspectives. While these experiments also have a strong compositional component,³⁴⁰ for this argument I focus on the theoretical insights and the idea of potentiality that his transcriptive approach offers. Third, in Tschumi’s work, the idea of interactivity between writer and reader, between the architectural design and its use, plays an important role; the user of architecture is given an active role, even to the extent of violation. I will first discuss these three aspects of Tschumi’s transcriptive approach through a close reading of a number of his early theoretical texts: “The Pleasure of Architecture”, and “Architecture and Transgression”, both written in the 1970s and focusing on the extraordinary experience of architecture when ‘ideal’ and ‘real’ space come together; and “Violence of Architecture”, written in the early 1980s, discussing the intense relationship between spaces and actions. Using this discussion, I intend to illustrate how Tschumi, in the early years of his practice, set an agenda for a theory of architecture that extends beyond the mere formal or functional, and deliberately addresses (literary) themes such as intense experience, violation, erotics, life and death. After this theoretical discussion, I will draw on Tschumi’s attempts to make such concepts as conflict, narrative and dislocation – concepts that, I argue, have a strong literary component – operational in his design work.

An overarching interest, present on all levels of Tschumi’s work, is the very experience of architecture. The text “Architecture and Transgression”³⁴¹ is centred on what Tschumi calls “the moment of architecture”, a moment when the concept of space is simultaneously experienced in the physical, sensuous encounter with its spatial reality. Tschumi argues that

340 The compositional aspects of Tschumi’s approach have been widely discussed by others. For such an appreciation of the work of Bernard Tschumi see amongst others: Geoffrey Broadbent, *Deconstruction: A Student Guide*, Academy Editions, London, 1997.

341 Bernard Tschumi, “Architecture and Transgression”, in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass./ London, 1996. pp. 64-78. First published in *Oppositions*, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass., 1976.

the paradox of architectural discourse lies in the fact that it is almost impossible to theorize about architecture while experiencing it. Therefore, a gap seems to exist between the *ideal*, conceptual space of discourse, and the *real* space that is experienced. Tschumi’s formulation of this paradox resonates with Lefebvre’s conflict between conceived space and its perceived and lived counterparts.³⁴² Tschumi argues that there is a moment when the real and the ideal, the concept and the experience, the rational and the intuitive, coincide. This moment, according to Tschumi, is the moment of architecture, and it is found through transgression. Only when architecture is balanced on a ‘rotting’ point, can such a moment be experienced. With “rot”, Tschumi makes a double reference; first, he makes the comparison with erotics: indeed, an intense moment, when thought, intuition and sensuality can coincide, when mind and body merge in the same experience; second, he refers to the thin boundaries between life and death, perfection and decay, a ‘rotting’ point, when limits are transgressed. This point does not always offer a pleasant experience, on the contrary, such moments come together with emotions of confusion, fear, violence or intense affection and even evoke strong physical impulses such as crying, running or shaking. In any case, they are moments of extreme intensity. This “moment of architecture” can very well be compared to the moment that Bachelard has referred to as the “poetic” moment, and which Ricoeur described as the power of the narrative: that it mediates between seemingly conflicting aspects. It is indeed the intersection of sensuous architectural experience and the awareness of its conceptual impact that defines Tschumi’s moment of architecture. The text “The Pleasure of Architecture”³⁴³ is also centred on this key moment when concept and experience merge, a moment that is given erotic significance. Tschumi repeatedly comes back to this moment in different formulations, when stating for example that the pleasure of architecture lies in “that impossible moment when an architectural act, brought to excess, reveals both the traces of reason and the immediate experience of space”, or that it is precisely “where concept and experience of space abruptly coincide, where architectural fragments collide and merge in delight, where the culture of architecture is endlessly deconstructed and all rules are transgressed”.

At the time “The Pleasure of Architecture” was written, architecture suffered, according to Tschumi, from a fashionable but too narrow interpretation of linguistic and semiotic theories, which excluded other themes in architecture, such as programme, action, or the experience of space. In “The Pleasure of Architecture”, Tschumi claims that such comparisons between architecture and language often caused a reduction of the significance of architecture, rather than opening new perspectives. Tschumi argues that instead of the focus on the structure of language, the merit of the comparison lies in the fragmented nature of language: in seeing ar-

342 At the time of writing of “The Pleasure of Architecture” Tschumi had indeed read Lefebvre’s work. In “The Architectural Paradox” in *Architecture and Disjunction*, pp. 26-51, of the same period, Tschumi refers explicitly to *La Production d’espace*, as well as to a conversation with Lefebvre in 1972. In a conversation with Enrique Walker, Tschumi further explains his interest in Lefebvre, see: Enrique Walker (ed.), *Tschumi on Architecture. Conversations with Enrique Walker*, The Monacelli Press, New York 2006, pp. 15-16

343 Bernard Tschumi, “The Pleasure of Architecture”, in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass./ London, 1996. pp. 81-96. First published in a different form in *Architectural Design*, March 1977

chitecture as a “series of fragments that together make up an architectural reading”.³⁴⁴ Indeed, an architectural experience is always composed of fragments, it is hardly ever possible to experience all fragments, all bits and pieces of an architectural space at once. Such seemingly loose fragments can melt together into the experience of the space, and in some cases, states Tschumi, this collection of fragments “sets in motion the operations of seduction and the unconscious”.³⁴⁵ Precisely such a collection of fragments is the text “The Pleasure of Architecture” in its form and content. While “Architecture and Transgression” was constructed as an argument in three clear parts (The Paradox, eROTicism and The Transgression), “The Pleasure of Architecture”, is more associative, as if it is less bounded by the rules of writing. Or, one could question, is the form of the text, a list of seemingly unrelated fragments, precisely the set of rules that makes it playful? Under the fragment about “bondage” for example, Tschumi states that, though architecture is usually restricted by rules, a manipulation of such rules can overcome their restrictive starting point and deliver a pleasure of playing with limits. This principle is similar to those we have found in the experimental writings of the Oulipo group: the playful investigation and experimentation with rules and constraints there leads to intriguing *forms* of literature, but also to a new *potential* of what literature can be. Like Oulipo, Tschumi uses rules and constraints in two ways: first, they are tools for architectural composition, and second, they open new *potentiality* on another level – they help find new perspectives in architecture.

“The Pleasure of Architecture” can be seen as an architectural response to Roland Barthes’ famous series of reflections on the act of writing in his book *The Pleasure of the Text*.³⁴⁶ Barthes’ original text sums up, in alphabetic order, a number of themes that he associates with the act of writing. Barthes text attaches to the act of writing an aura of erotic pleasure, in which the word *jouissance* has the double meaning of playfulness and orgasmic pleasure. Tschumi’s text is also a series of loosely related fragments, which aims to set in motion not only the thoughts of the reader, but also sensations of his or her own experience. It is both playful and serious, aiming to shine another light on the act of architectural design, and to provoke the thought of architecture as a possibly erotic experience. The “mask”, for instance, is presented as an erotic metaphor: a mask seduces through disguise. Architecture, states Tschumi, makes use of multiple masks, of which the façade might be said to be the most literal one. The façade hides or instead unveils what lies behind, but likewise, concepts or technical features can be seen as masks. The point is that architecture can be read in multiple ways, and that one of the pleasures of architecture is to “simultaneously veil and unveil, simulate and dissimulate. . . by its very presence [the mask] says that, in the background, there is something else”.³⁴⁷ In the fragment about ‘excess’, themes from the ‘transgression’ text reappear. Again, Tschumi states that it is in the conflict of irreconcilable extremes, such as “sensual pleasure” and the “pleasure of order” that the real pleasure of the act of architecture lies. In order to find such moments,

344 Ibidem p. 95

345 Ibidem, p. 96

346 Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, Hill and Wang, New York 1975 [*Le plaisir du texte*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1973]

347 Tschumi, “The Pleasure of Architecture”, pp. 90-91

indeed, one has to search for “the most forbidden parts; where limits are perverted and prohibitions are transgressed”.³⁴⁸

Tschumi’s later text “Violence of Architecture”³⁴⁹ has also been strongly influenced by Georges Bataille and Roland Barthes. Bataille contends that erotics is intrinsically linked with taboo, sacrifice, death, transgression and pleasure. Violence also plays a part in the erotic experience, as “a breaking down of established patterns”.³⁵⁰ According to Renata Hejduk, who studied the influence of Bataille in Tschumi’s early work, Bernard Tschumi indeed uses Bataille’s terms to establish his architectural theory, which provokes us to “move beyond the expected clean and rational experience toward another type of experience - unexpected, visceral, sensual, even dirty”, combining “the power of the rational . . . with the sensual erotics of the irrational, the particular, and the momentary.”³⁵¹ In “Violence of Architecture”, Tschumi explores the dynamic relation between architecture and the social action that takes place within it. He claims that architecture does not exist without action, events and programme; echoing in this way Lefebvre’s statement that space is by definition social, Tschumi thus contends that it is crucial to consider the social activities that take place in space. According to Tschumi, the use of space can be seen as an act of violence, as the movement of the body in a space temporarily changes its order. Violence is not necessarily seen as aggression, but rather as a metaphor for the intense relationship between space and its user. The user violates space and vice versa. In the first case, architecture is “an organism engaged in constant intercourse with users, whose bodies rush against the carefully established rules of architectural thought”, while space inflicts violence on its users in the case of, for example, “steep and dangerous staircases, those corridors consciously made too narrow for crowds”.³⁵² This is not to say that violence of space is negative, quite the contrary, the way in which people affect space and space affects people can be a form of pleasure – just as violence, pleasure and erotics are all part of the same intense experience in Bataille. In this text, the active role of the user of space is thus brought to the fore. It is through his or her activities and movements, to the events which gather a crowd of people in space, that architectural limits are transgressed and that new uses and experiences arise.

Tschumi’s approach can thus be characterized as a continuous attempt to create conditions for a dynamic architecture, focused on the relationship between space, experience and social activity. I would argue that this implies, next to a re-thinking of the limits of architecture, also a radical re-thinking of the concept of place. The reach of this “transcriptive” approach does not remain limited to the architectural object as an autonomous, isolated entity. Its position

348 Ibidem, p.91

349 Bernard Tschumi, “Violence of Architecture”, in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass./ London, 1996. pp. 120-137. First published in *Artforum*, September 1981.

350 Georges Bataille, *Erotism: death and sensuality*, quoted by Renata Hejduk, “Death Becomes Her: transgression, decays and eROTicism in Bernard Tschumi’s early writings and projects”, in: *The Journal of Architecture*, Volume 12, Issue 4, September 2007, pp. 393-404

351 Renata Hejduk, “Death Becomes Her: transgression, decays and eROTicism in Bernard Tschumi’s early writings and projects”, in: *The Journal of Architecture*, Volume 12, Issue 4, September 2007, pp. 393-404

352 Bernard Tschumi, “Violence of Architecture”, in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass./ London, 1996. pp. 124

in the city plays a part in the possibility to engage such themes as social activities, movement, programme and conflict in architectural design. Although Tschumi does not depart from such ideas as the phenomenological understanding of place, place is an important aspect in his work in that it becomes a platform for experience and action, rather than just the site where architecture happens to be located. Like Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi is interested in the possibilities for “dislocation” in architecture, in the sense of creating conditions for actions to take place. In *The Fate of Place*, Edward S. Casey devotes special attention to Bernard Tschumi’s ideas of dislocation, defining his work as an attempt to re-conceptualize the notion of place in a contemporary way as an *unstable* concept, rather than as fixed location: “. . . a new sense of place that has more to do with motion than with stability, dislocation than location, point than containing surface.”³⁵³ For Casey, Tschumi’s work offers an architectural response to the dynamics, instability, conflicts and contradictions of place that are addressed in the theories of for example Derrida. Tschumi’s projects show how architectural concepts such as the event can help in generating an architecture that *gives place* for public interaction: “. . . in the case of architecture an event is not only something that takes place; it also *gives place* (donne lieu), gives room for things to happen. . . . Architecture, then, does not occupy a place but provides place . . . and in so doing occurs as an event that ‘there is’.”³⁵⁴

In this way, place becomes a key concept, while being simultaneously denied; the idea of *dis*-location seems a *contradictio in terminis*. However, it can be argued that exactly this operation of in-stabilizing place brings us to a true understanding of place in relation to the social activity:

126 “So conceived,” states Casey, “a building *spaces itself out in place*. Not because place is what a building is *in*, that is, its bare locus, but because place is what a building expands *into* . . . The subject spaces out in the very building that, in the course of its own *espacement*, ‘makes place for the event. In doing so, building and subject alike let that event take place; they bring it to implacement, find place for it.’”³⁵⁵ In Tschumi’s approach, opening place and transgressing rather than imposing limits, place becomes challenging, provoking conflict, pleasure, interaction and events. And it is through the subject, user or inhabitant, in other words, through social practice, that such place can be activated.

353 Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place, A Philosophical History*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles / London, 1998 (1997), p.317

354 Ibidem, pp. 313-314

355 Ibidem, p. 315

3.3.2 Architecture and event: The Manhattan Transcripts³⁵⁶

Bernard Tschumi has thus explored how architectural spaces need events and movements in order to achieve a genuine architectural experience. Instead of aiming for a fixed image, Tschumi argues that the city only then becomes interesting when spaces, movements and events meet, and even contradict each other. The following will be a “close reading” of some of Tschumi’s design works in relation to the theoretical concepts that he has elaborated upon in the texts that have been collected in *Architecture & Disjunction*. I will discuss Tschumi’s “transcriptive” approach to architecture in his use of literary concepts such as narrative, conflict and dislocation. By a close reading of *The Manhattan Transcripts* and Parc de la Villette I will bring to the fore how Tschumi’s interdisciplinary investigations have led to an architectural approach that deliberately takes into account the “inherently public nature” of architecture and its role as “something that offers a place to public events”.³⁵⁷ In *The Manhattan Transcripts*, Tschumi experiments with the relation between spaces, movements and events.

A close reading of this work will show how ‘transcriptive’ techniques such as narrative, sequences and experiments with the characters and spaces in the story result in an alternative theory of architecture. I will then briefly discuss the winning competition entry for Parc de la Villette in Paris, which became Tschumi’s first built result of these theoretical investigations. Finally, I will characterize Tschumi’s approach as a continuous attempt to create conditions for encounters – conditions for space, movement and event to meet.

In *The Manhattan Transcripts*, Tschumi’s concern as to how architectural spaces need events and movements in order to achieve a genuine architectural experience is addressed in architectural terms. In this project, Tschumi illustrates that it is necessary to mobilize a new set of instruments to study the rhetorical relation between the social and the built. By means of a notational system borrowed from cinema, *The Transcripts* “try to offer a different reading of architecture, in which space, movement and events are independent, yet stand in a new relation to one another”.³⁵⁸ *The Manhattan Transcripts* combine architectural drawings, abstractions of newspaper photographs, maps of parks and streets, sections of towers and the movement of people and objects in order to offer an alternative “reading” of the relation between the social and the built in Manhattan. In four episodes (the park, the street, the tower/fall, and the block) a story about a murder is told. Whereas the first part starts off as a linear narrative in which the story is told in a seemingly rational manner, the following episodes eventually lead to more and more conflicting situations, dislocations and confrontations between architectural spaces, the programmes and events taking place and the movement of the people involved.

356 Some fragments of the following passages have in an earlier form been published in OASE: Tom Avermaete and Klaske Havik, “Accommodating the Public Sphere. Bernard Tschumi’s Dynamic Definition of Architecture”, in OASE#77 *Into The Open. Accommodating the Public*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2008, pp.43-57

357 Tschumi, Thames and Hudson 2003, p. 111

358 Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts*, Academy Editions, London 1994, p.7 (originally published in 1981 by Architectural Design, London)

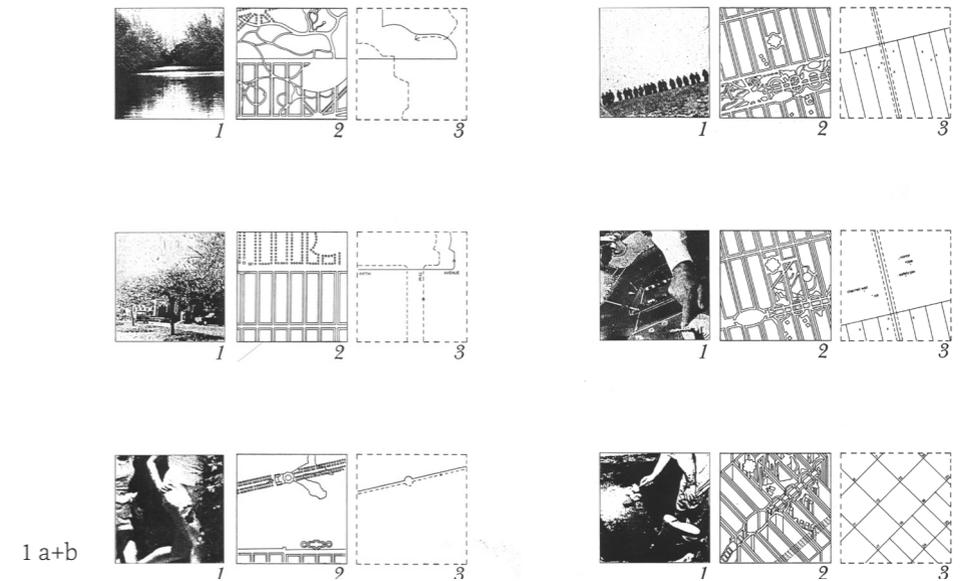
In the first chapter, each combination of drawings and pictures challenges the reader/viewer to imagine what exactly could have happened. In this first part, a linear narrative is suggested, telling the story of a crime that took place in the park. However, when the chapter proceeds, the architectural drawings start to transform: they are mirrored, the position of objects on the plan changes. By the end of part 1, arriving at the 24th frame, the plan has changed into elevation. The images show possible relationships between place (architectural plan, or a distortion of the plan), the movements (shown as trajectories of protagonists by dotted lines and arrows on the plan), and the events (represented by fragments of newspaper photographs, suggestion rather than precisely depicting an event). As Tschumi states in the accompanying text, it is precisely the combination of these different bits of information, that offers an insight: “Only together do they define the architectural space of ‘The Park’.”³⁵⁹ In the second chapter of *The Manhattan Transcripts*, called “The Street”, the continuity is spatial, rather than temporal. The chapter depicts 42nd Street in New York, starting at the Hudson River, and, after passing 24 ‘borders’, ending at the East River. The starting point of notation of this chapter is the street plan upon which strips are projected. Each ‘border’ strip consist of respectively a photographical fragment, an architectural collage or diagram, an in-between zone of movement through the street, indicating a route with dotted lines, and below, closing the strip, a scheme or architectural plan. The chapter is about crossing borders between the different worlds that all exist along 42nd Street: “MT2 does not describe these ‘worlds’, but the borders that describe them, Each border becomes space with the events it contains, with the movements that transgress it.”³⁶⁰ Chapter 3, “The Tower” explores different programmes, such as the asylum, the prison, the home, the office and the hotel, in combination with the typology of the block. Photographs and collages are no longer part of the notational system. Instead, each page shows a sequence of five architectural drawings, mostly axonometric projections, showing, within the typical space of a block, a number of rooms along a corridor. Tschumi explains how this sequence “modifies them through the introduction (transgression) of movement patterns”.³⁶¹ Through the event of the fall of a person, unrelated to the mentioned programmes, the sequence transforms into a vertical one, expressing the movement of the fall. Thus, this chapter brings together various programmes with the relatively neutral space of the block, and with an occurring event. Here, Tschumi’s position becomes clear. The spaces, programmes and events are seemingly unrelated, but they do influence each other in the development of the narrative. Instead of aiming for a fixed image, Tschumi argues that architecture only then becomes interesting when spaces, movements and events meet, and even contradict each other. As Tschumi states: “The Manhattan Transcripts aim to maintain these contradictions in a dynamic manner, in a new reciprocity and conflict.”³⁶² This aspect of conflict and confrontation is brought to the extreme in the fourth and last chapter of *The Manhattan Transcripts*, ‘The Block’. Here, the apparently neutral spaces of the yards are confronted with unlikely programmes. Dancers, football players, tightrope walkers and soldiers invade the spaces. First, photographic fragments of spaces and characters are presented separately,

359 Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts*, Academy Editions, London 1994, p. 8 [originally published in 1981 by Architectural Design]

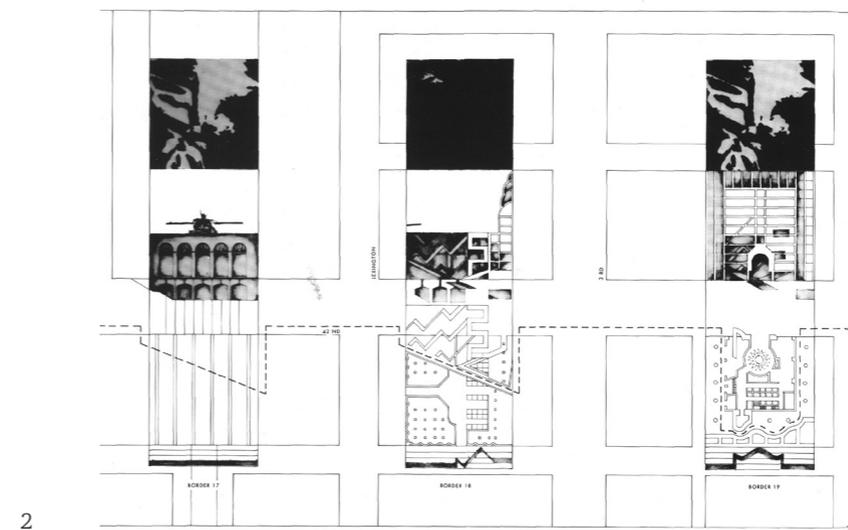
360 Ibidem.

361 Ibidem, p.11

362 Ibidem, p. 9



1 a+b



2

1 a+b Bernard Tschumi, Pages from the first chapter of The Manhattan Transcripts: “The Park”.

2 MT2. ‘The Block’. Second chapter of The Manhattan Transcripts. Scans from The Manhattan Transcripts 1994, p. 30

while choreographic diagrams show the movements of the characters. Then, the movements start distorting the architectural perspective, the choreographic notations become spatial axonometric projections, and start interfering with the architectural drawings. Finally, the photographs of characters are superimposed (pictures of dancers and acrobats melt together with soldiers), and divided in fragments, the combined characters invade the spatial fields. Indeed, spaces, movements and the events caused by the characters melt together in a dynamic confrontation of fragments.

Thus, in *The Manhattan Transcripts*, the narrative is not neutral, it is subject to change. As Tschumi puts it, the last chapter “exhausts the narrative – it deconstructs programs in the same way that it deconstructs forms and movements; then it adds, repeats, accumulated, inserts, ‘fades in’, distorts, disjoins, always dealing with discrete, discontinuous moments, for each frame can always be exchanged for another.”³⁶³

In this way, seemingly impossible combinations of spaces and events render interesting new kinds of spatial experiences, unexpected actors and programmes change place or create different places. *The Manhattan Transcripts* can be considered as a plea to regard the essence of the city as the complex confrontation of spaces with different movements and events. This dynamic conception of the city resonates strongly with contemporary definitions of the public sphere such as that of Richard Sennet: “an essential component of public space: the overlay of function in a single territory, which creates complexities of experience on that turf.”³⁶⁴

Transcription, in *The Manhattan Transcripts* project, does not imply literally translating a piece of literature into a piece of architecture, rather, it offers a way to investigate an urban space by

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means of narrative. In the recently published interviews with Enrique Walker,³⁶⁵ Tschumi reflects on his architectural practice and the way he has tried to make his conceptual approach operational. About narrative, Tschumi states: “I think it is important to stress that architectural narrative should never be addressed in a linear fashion. As we experience or perceive them, the series of fragments that make up architecture are constantly re-arranging in different way, so that there is no single linear path, even though one of the favorite means of architectural organization is linear. The structure of narrative is not populated by a single story, but by many stories, or rather, by different stories for different people. Architecture never conveys a singular story.”³⁶⁶

Indeed, the *Manhattan Transcripts* tell a story, but it is open to interpretation, and it can be read in different ways. In that sense, the reader (or viewer) of the project participates in constructing the story.

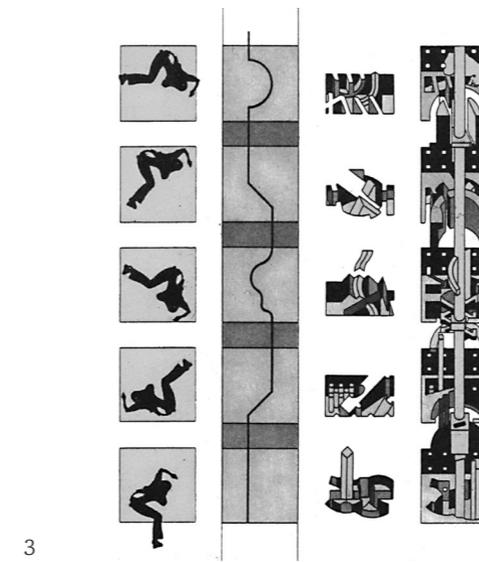
The project for Parc de la Villette in Paris allowed Bernard Tschumi to bring the concepts developed in his theoretical explorations and experimental projects, such as *The Manhattan Transcripts*, into practice. The competition brief for the Parc de la Villette in 1982 was already

363 Ibidem, p.10

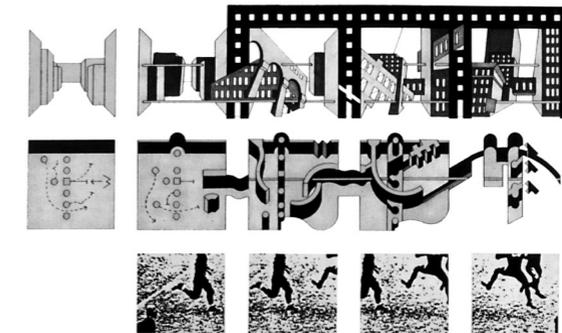
364 Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, Penguin books, London 2002 p. 297 (originally published in 1974)

365 Enrique Walker (ed.), *Tschumi on Architecture. Conversations with Enrique Walker*, The Monacelli Press, New York 2006

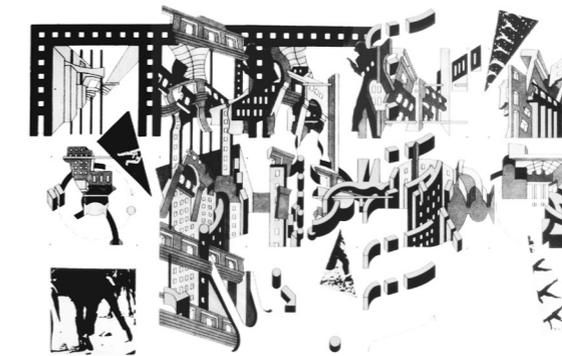
366 Quote from an interview with Marco de Michaelis about “intertextuality”. In: Tschumi, Giovanni Damiani (ed.), *Thames&Hudson*, 2003, p. 23



3



4 a+b



3 MT3. “The Tower”. Third chapter of *The Manhattan Transcripts*. Scan from *The Manhattan Transcripts* 1994, p. V (appendix Color plates)

4 a+b MT4. “The Block”. Fourth chapter of *The Manhattan Transcripts*. Scan from *The Manhattan Transcripts* 1994, p. VII, p. IX (appendix Color Plates)

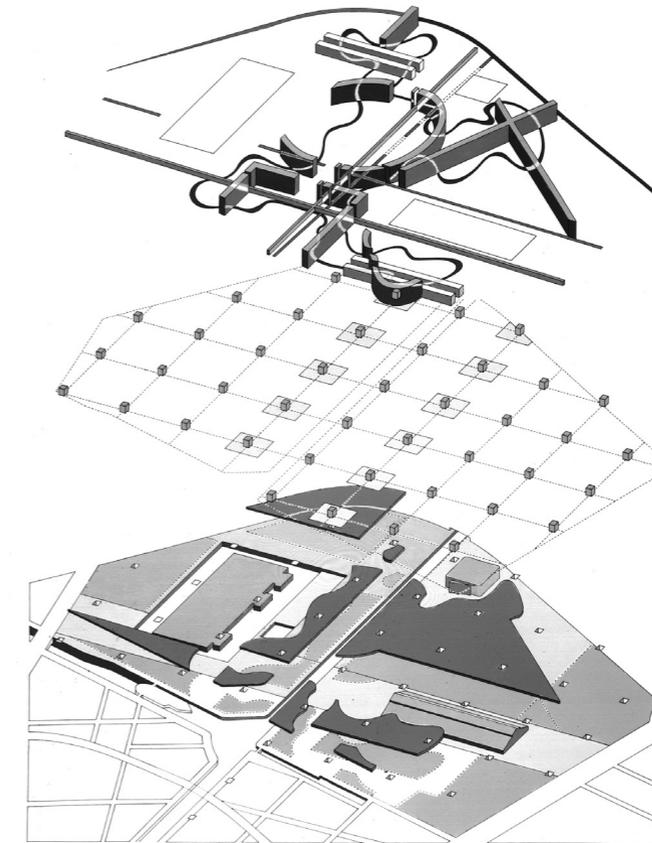
an invitation for new approaches regarding the park as a public urban space for interaction. Programme, rather than form, was a dominant issue in the competition brief. It had to become an “urban park for the 21st century” with a complexity of public functions: education, leisure, gardens, culture. For Tschumi, the competition was an opportunity to bring his dynamic definition of architecture into practice: creating a dynamic, unstable place that allows architectural narratives to unfold through events. Tschumi’s design for Parc de la Villette is radically different from the traditional, picturesque idea of a park as a part of nature in the city.³⁶⁷ The design, characterized by a super-imposition of three systems (lines, points and surfaces), resulted in a new kind of public space, in which encounters and events are actively generated. The “folies”, red architectural objects spread through the park, work as what Tschumi calls “common denominators”, providing public recognition and leaving space for events. It has to be noted that with the *folie*, Tschumi plays a word game: the English Folly, for the separate object, becomes the French ‘folie’ which means madness. Here, the reference to Barthes’ and Bataille’s aspects of pleasure and erotics come again to the fore. Tschumi’s architecture has to provoke unexpected connections: violence of space, erotics, madness.³⁶⁸ As Tschumi himself noted:

“La Villette promotes programmatic instability, functional *Folie*. . . the endless combinatory possibilities of the folies give way to a multiplicity of impressions. . . La Villette is a term in constant production, in continuous change; it’s meaning is never fixed but is always deferred, differed, rendered irresolute by the multiplicity of meanings it inscribes.”³⁶⁹ This multiplicity of meanings also means that the narrative is subject to change; that it is constantly re-interpreted and re-written by the visitors of the park. Like many European architects, I have been one of those visitors. I recall my first impressions of Parc de la Villette, when I visited it shortly after completion, after my first year of study at the Faculty of Architecture in Delft. In “Architecture and Transgression”, Tschumi describes how his visit, as a student in 1965, to the dilapidated near-ruin of Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoy revealed for him the essence of architecture. For Tschumi, the state of the building revealed the power of decay, the vulnerability of architecture, the naked essence of the project. The experience I had as a student in Parc de la Villette was not about the project coming of age – the brand new park evoked in me another essence: that architecture is not merely about form, that it is not simply readable at first sight. What I encountered was not a clear concept, not a form that could easily be drawn, but a vast space, bound together by the denominators of the follies and *by the activities taking place*. Of this first visit, I do not recall the exact route I took, I do not remember the precise shapes and forms. What I recall is the atmosphere of possibility.

367 See for a concise discussion of this paradigm shift in park architecture the polemic text of Dutch landscape architect Adriaan Geuze: “Accelerating Darwin” in: Gerrit Smienk (ed.) *Nederlandse Landschapsarchitectuur. Tussen traditie en experiment*. Academie van Bouwkunst, Amsterdam 1993, p. 16-21

368 In the article ‘Madness and the combinative’, written in 1984, when the project of Parc de la Villette in Paris was at the core of Tschumi’s practice, deals with bringing together the “unexpected and the aleatory, the pragmatic and the passionate, and would turn into reason what was formerly excluded from the realm of architecture because it seemed to belong to the realm of the irrational”. in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass./ London, 1996. pp. 172-189

369 Bernard Tschumi, “Abstract Mediation and Strategy”, in: *Architecture and Disjunction*, MIT press, Cambridge Mass./ London 1996, p.201



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Scheme of superimposed layers, Parc de la Villette, Paris.

Also in more recent projects, Tschumi's ideas about architectural experience have developed into operational design concepts, which all have in common that they actively generate movements and events. The school of architecture in Marne-la Vallée, for example, is organized around "an un-programmed, event-oriented large central space . . . activated by the density around it . . . A social and cultural space."³⁷⁰ In cultural centre Le Fresnoy in Tourcoing, the most important space is the left-over space between the existing buildings and the enormous roof placed above them. This "in-between" space is where all infrastructure is organized and where users and visitors meet.³⁷¹ A similar operation is carried out in the Rouen Concert Hall. Here, a circulation space has been created between the inner and outer "envelopes" of the building. Through 'vectors', the movement of flows of people is activated inside this "double envelope".³⁷² A common objective in all of Tschumi's projects is thus to create *conditions* for encounters. The superimposition in Parc de La Villette, the oversized circulation spaces of Fresnoy and Rouen, the combining and intersecting of unexpected different routes and programmes all cause movement in space, thereby generating events, they are "building-generators of events. As much through their programs as their spatial potential, they accelerate a cultural or social transformation that is already in progress."³⁷³ Bernard Tschumi's theoretical investigations – both his writings inspired by Barthes and Bataille, and the theoretical project *The Manhattan Transcripts* – have thus lead him to an approach in architectural practice that is not focused on form, but on the possibilities of space to generate extraordinary experiences, to transgress limits of expectation and to allow for encounters between people and space. As such this approach, deriving from theoretical transcriptions of literary and philosophical texts to texts addressing architecture, as well as from experiments at the limits of the field of

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architecture such as *The Manhattan Transcripts*, indeed answers to my view of a "transcriptive" approach to architecture. First, Tschumi shows a deep interest in the social aspects of architecture. He states that "there is no architecture without everyday life, movement, and action; . . . it is the most dynamic aspects of their disjunctions that suggest a new definition of architecture".³⁷⁴ Tschumi's definition of architecture is paired with a specific perspective on the public sphere and the role of architecture, and throughout his work, the quest "to arrive at a more socially inscribed and socially productive practice"³⁷⁵ can be recognized. His quest resonates with Henri Lefebvre's ideas on space as "socially produced" and connected to struc-

370 *Architecture in/of Motion*, NAI Publishers Rotterdam, 1997, p.57

371 For Tschumi's reflections on this project, see for example the interview Le Fresnoy with Enrique Walker, in: Enrique Walker (ed.), *Tschumi on architecture, conversation with Enrique Walker*, The Monacelli Press, New York 2006, pp.115-122. See also Tschumi, *Le Fresnoy. Architecture In / Between*, The Monacelli Press, New York 1994

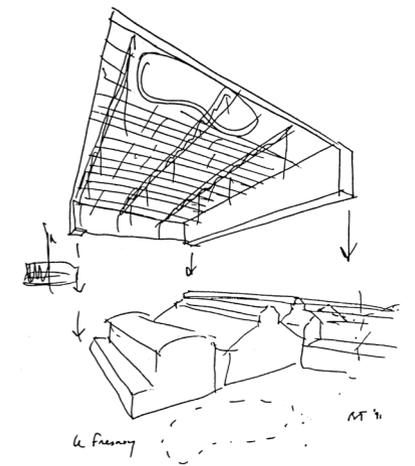
372 See for example Bernard Tschumi, "Vectors and Envelopes", in: Bernard Tschumi and Irene Cheng, *The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, The Monacelli Press New York 2003, pp. 64-65. See also Enrique Walker (ed.), *Tschumi on architecture, conversation with Enrique Walker*, The Monacelli Press, New York 2006, pp.144-145.

373 Giovanni Damiani (ed.), *Tschumi*, Thames&Hudson, London 2003, p. 49

374 Bernard Tschumi, introduction to: *Architecture and Disjunction*, MIT press, Cambridge Mass./ London 1996, p. 23.

375 Bernard Tschumi, "Urban Pleasures and the Moral Good", in: *Assemblage 25*, MIT Press 1995, p. 9

6+7



8



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9



6+7 Cultural Center Le Fresnoy, Tourcoing, concept sketch and photo.

8 School for Architecture in Marne-la Vallée. Large, event-oriented central space.

9 Concert Hall in Rouen; space in between the inner and outer "envelop" of the building.

tures of power.³⁷⁶ Tschumi's approach to architecture is a dynamic one: according to Tschumi, space becomes meaningful only through the movements and events caused by people using these spaces in both expected and unexpected ways. His architecture thus provides possibilities for various programmes, activities and social interactions. Second, Tschumi's approach also answers to the meaning of transcription as an experimental process. For Tschumi, concepts such as "dislocation" and "disjunction", which are inspired by deconstructivist discourse, are more than tools for formal experimentation; on the contrary, he has used such concepts explicitly in connection to the awareness that architecture has, first and foremost, a social function. His "writing through" in the process of architecture consists of a consequent re-questioning of limits that have often been taken for granted in architectural practice. The programme, for instance, is a concept that Tschumi addresses in a detailed way, arriving at new insights about the relationship between space, programme and architectural experience. Third, in Tschumi's work the idea of the "other version" is clearly present, not only through his elaboration on concepts from various disciplines and the use of instruments such as "narrative" or "sequence" from literature and film. I have argued that the idea of the "other version" also has to do with the participatory role of the reader/user, and it is precisely this aspect of participation, and even active violation by the user of architecture, that comes to the fore in Tschumi's work. Altogether, the three aspects of transcription in the work of Tschumi result in a rich approach to architecture, which indeed centres on the social, which tries through transdisciplinary experimentation to establish productive interaction between theoretical concepts and the experience of architectural space. As such, Tschumi's "transcriptive" explorations can be seen as an agenda for architecture to confront, to provoke, to challenge activity and emotion.

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3.3.3. Transcription in architectural education

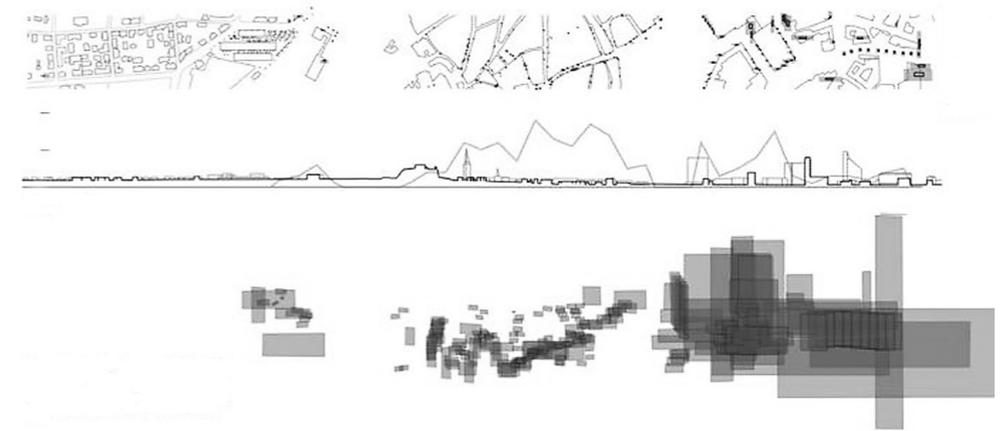
The discussion of Bernard Tschumi's written and architectural work has shown how "transcriptive" notions can be operational in establishing an architectural practice that addresses the social, the experimental and the experiential aspects of architecture. For Tschumi, these insights have always developed in close relation to explorations carried out in architectural education. For example, the exercises that Tschumi carried out with students at the AA School of Architecture in London in the 1970s explored the possibilities of using literary techniques in order to generate architectural concepts. By looking at architectural notions from a literary perspective, he intended to reach a richer, interdisciplinary dialectic between the verbal and the visual. In these courses, Tschumi conducted a search for analogies between the ways that authors influence the structure of stories through the careful manipulation of vocabulary and grammar, and the ways that architects engage through architectural form with the social. Using the literary works of Calvino, Joyce or Poe as a starting point, texts were used as sources to provide programmes and events from which the architectural work could develop. The

376 Especially Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit à la ville [The Right to the City]* and *La Production de l'espace*, 1974 [*The Production of Space*, Blackwell, London 1991], would be of great importance for Tschumi.

1



2



3



1, 2+3 The Border Conditions studio in Tallinn. Sander Laheij projected a trip on central Tallinn. By mapping the intensity of control, advertising, traffic and tourism, he investigated the manifestation of borders between different social and spatial areas. On the verge of the historical centre and a dilapidated worker's area, Laheij proposed an urban connector, consisting of a public transport platform and a public square, roofed by a hotel.

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notion of narrative, “the unfolding of events in literary context”, was transported to architecture: “To what extent,” Tschumi wondered, “could literary narrative shed light on the organization of events in buildings, whether called ‘use’, ‘functions’, ‘activities’ or ‘programmes’?”³⁷⁷ Such explorations with students, in which spaces were confronted with unlikely programmes or vice versa, in which narrative structures would lay a basis for architectural design strategies, may well have stimulated not only the students’ thinking about architecture, but Tschumi’s as well. The AA exercises may have sown the seeds for *The Manhattan Transcript* project, or for the investigation of such concepts as the event in the further work of Bernard Tschumi.

For students and architects alike, exercises departing from a “transcriptive” approach can be very helpful in developing a broader view of architecture, exploring the limits of the field rather than remaining within the constraints of the general, often rather linear, processes of architectural design. In the following paragraphs I will illustrate by means of a number of educational examples how literary concepts such as narrative, temporality, perspective and character can be used in architectural research and design. Perspective, for instance, implies the reading of a site or situation from a specific point of view or direction, for example from the point of view of a character. Forcing oneself to look from the perspective of another person, a student can discover other features than when limited to his or her own field of reference. Temporality implies taking into account the timeframe in which events happen. Places and buildings change through time and through use. The concept of temporality can thus encourage researchers and designers to consider possible changes that might occur in time, as well as imagine the experience of a site or design under different temporal circumstances, such as seasons and times of the day. Narrative is a concept that brings together space, time and event and as such can help seeing an architectural project in the light of the events that it may allow or conflict with.

In the early 1990s, a number of students at the Faculty of Architecture in Delft sought to arrive at architectural statements through the close reading of novels. The graduation project of Michiel Riedijk and Juliette Bekkering from 1989 for example, is an attempt to reconstruct the journey of Odysseus in a series of architectural objects. The project presents a narrative of a 24-hour-long boat trip on the Lago Maggiore. The narrative of Homer’s Odysseus provided the brief for the architectural project. In the project, each adventure of Odysseus presents another theme of sensory perception, each of which is “transcribed” into an architectural design.³⁷⁸ Belgian architect Wim Cuyvers used his personal attempts to put the spatial imagination of the writer into a physically built space by “constructing the spaces that were described in novels”,³⁷⁹ or to use themes from a novel in an architectural work as the basis for student

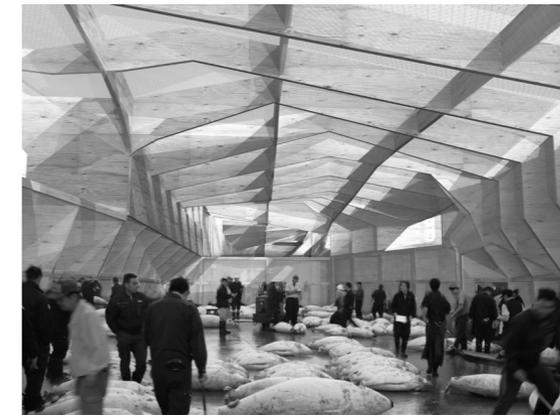
377 Bernard Tschumi, “Space and Events”, in: *Architecture and Disjunction*, MIT press, Cambridge Mass./ London 1996, p. 146 [Original publication in *Themes III: the Discourse of Events*, Architectural Association, London 1983]

378 Michiel Riedijk and Juliette Bekkering, in: OASE #29/30 *Sprekende Architectuur* [Telling Architecture], SUN Publishers, Nijmegen, 1991, p.69; reviewed by Arthur Wortman in “Voyage Architectural. Een Odyssee voor de Archiprix”, *ARCHIS* 3/91, Bohn Stafleu van Loghum, Houten 1991, pp. 13-15

379 Wim Cuyvers, “From the Dream of the Novel Turned to Stone to the Acknowledgement of Public Space”, OASE #70 *Architecture&Literature Reflections / Imaginations*, NAI Publishers Rotterdam 2006, p. 229



4a



4b



4c

4 a,b+c Tallinn Border Conditions: project by Max Rink. Starting from the analysis of urban activity and experienced friction along of a tramline trough the northern housing quarters of Tallinn, the project explored the social segregation in Tallinn. A border condition was identified at Balti Jaam, the railway station at the verge of the old city walls and the dilapidated housing area Kalamaja. For this ‘Border Zone’, a new market hall was designed, taking up various scales of commercial activities, for neighbourhood groups to participate.

exercises he conducted, in which indeed the deep emotional experience evoked by a certain text was meant to be transcribed to architecture. However, as Cuyvers correctly noticed, such literal transcriptions might not reveal the essence of what literature has to offer. Instead, as we learned from Cuyvers, “what literary sensibilities really have to offer [is] a grasp of the ‘non-lingual, erotic and universal’, allowing oneself to be vulnerable, and receptive”.³⁸⁰ In recent courses with students in architecture, he found another way of using literary inspiration to offer alternative views on architecture. In literature, Cuyvers argued, the character of the poor, the oppressed, the one in need, is often the perspective from which a story is told. In order to experience the city from this other perspective, Cuyvers encouraged students in a project for Paris, for example, to spend an amount of time as a homeless person, without any money to spend and without a place to stay. In this way, the city was given a totally different meaning, one would look for shelter in urban space, experience the quest for daily needs to survive life on the street, and become aware of the social differences existing in the city. In other projects, he looked with students for such places of need, essentially *public* places, as Cuyvers argues, places that are not owned, that are appropriated by the characters in need. He found such places in “cities turned inside-out, cities which have been shot, shot in the back such as Sarajevo, or abandoned cities such as Belgrade or Tirana, or neglected parts of cities such as Brussels or The Hague, cities . . . where the public and the private mingle endlessly, unashamedly”.³⁸¹ He argued that such visits were no longer about making and designing spaces, but about *reading* them through the eyes of the character in need. In such extreme public spaces, among garbage, temporary shelters or hiding spaces, one is exposed to the essence of space as something not only dealing with life but just as well with decay, need, death. And there we come

140 back to the notions that, like Bernard Tschumi, Cuyvers borrowed from Bataille, notions that literature addresses more often than architecture. This, for Cuyvers, is probably the most important lesson to be learnt from Bataille, from literature, and the most important lesson for students to learn: the capability of *reading* space, or more precisely public space, as existential space, as space of being, not only offering comfort and hygiene but rather being open to all aspects of life – and death.³⁸²

In the Border Conditions diploma studio in Delft, many such “marginal” places have been visited with students, and an approach of reading and rewriting has been at stake in many of the projects³⁸³. Jennifer Bloomer’s idea of the challenging roles of the reader might indeed also apply to the reading of such a complex “assemblage of bits and pieces” as a city.³⁸⁴ The city, as a spatial construct, is regarded and actively confronted as a complex identity, which can be explored, engaged with and reacted to. Wim Cuyvers was involved as a tutor of the group

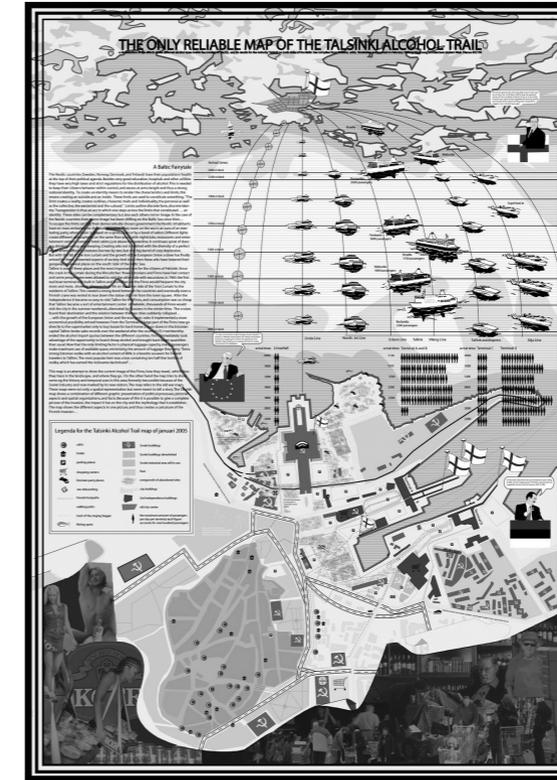
380 Christoph Grafe, Klaske Havik and Madeleine Maaskant, *Architecture&Literature. Reflections / Imaginations*, editorial OASE# 70, NAI Publishers Rotterdam 2006, discussing Cuyvers’ position, pp. 3-7

381 Wim Cuyvers, “Architect + Pedagoog / Pedagogie + Architectuur” in Wim Cuyvers, *Tekst over Tekst*, Stroom Den Haag 2005, pp.171, fragment freely translated from Dutch by KMH

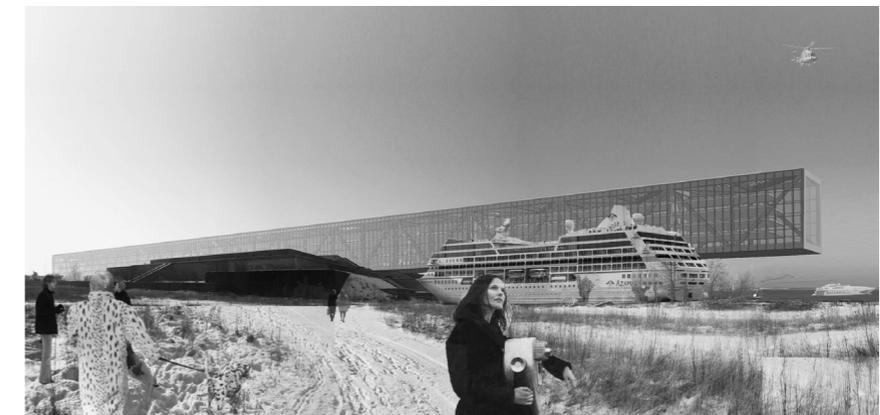
382 Interview with Wim Cuyvers, November 4, 2005, Jan van Eyck Academy Maastricht.

383 For an extensive overview of the Border Conditions diploma studio, see Marc Schoonderbeek (ed.), *Border Conditions*, Architectura&Natura, Amsterdam, 2010. For the discussion of the Tallinn group, I have used fragments of my contribution in this book: Klaske Havik, “Readings on the Edge. Border Conditions Studio Tallinn 2004-2005”, pp. 164-170

384 Jennifer Bloomer, *Architecture and the Text*, 1993



5a



5b

5 a+b Niels Tilanus focused on the spatial practices in the urban wasteland of Tallinn’s coastal zone. Map depicting the phenomenon of Finnish day-tourists looking for cheap alcohol. Niels Tilanus proposed to interfere with the monumental Linnahall, adding hotel and conference functions.

who visited Marseille in 2004-2005. In 2005, a group under guidance of Oscar Rommens and Sebas Veldhuisen visited the cities of Ceuta and Gibraltar, on opposite sides of the Strait of Gibraltar. In Ceuta, the presence of migrants from Northern Africa, hoping to pass through the fences to the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, surely made the students aware of such questions of need, while the British pensioners in Gibraltar offered the opposite perspective of the ones who “have”. I have myself guided a Border Conditions group to Helsinki and Tallinn in 2004-2005. Especially in Tallinn, the perspective of the needy came clearly to the fore in the neglected neighbourhoods of the former Russian immigrants. Sharp contrasts between such places and the shiny state of the touristic medieval city and the new high-rise business centre were read and reacted to by the students. The Tallinn project began with an attempt to grasp the city by moving through it at different speeds: by car, on foot, stopping intuitively at fascinating spaces and objects, searching for identities that could be revealed by maps, photographs and writings that could offer readings of a specific moment in time, identifying traces and starting points that might offer relevant material for future scenarios. As the students described their approach:

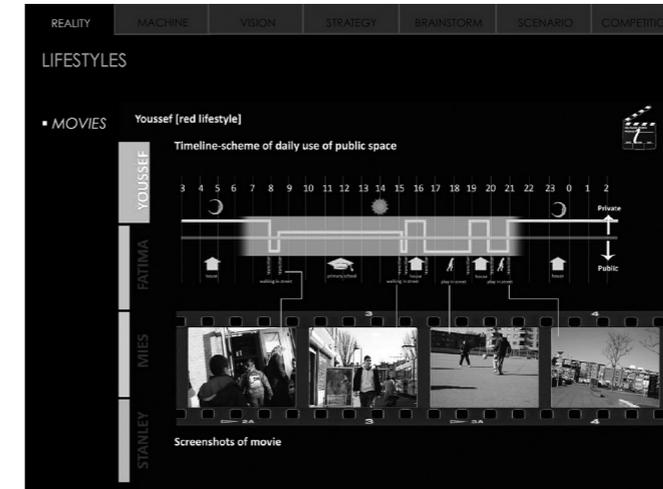
“The possibility of picking up a line in the dark and trying to trace it wherever it may lead, is possibly the only way of not losing oneself and thus trying to find a poetic notion that has any depth or substance. Through methods of diagramming, drawing, juxtaposing... we each tried to find an entrance, a fissure in a seemingly unending limitless body.”³⁸⁵ The most challenging sites that came out of this quest were the edges, where different time periods, sociopolitical systems and spatial structures collide. Such edges were sometimes very sharp and narrow, with strong visual contrasts; sometimes they consisted of larger stretches of urban wasteland.

142 Following the analysis of Tallinn’s border conditions, the students proposed designs that attract public life to the left-over spaces, the unused edges between different urban entities, by combining, for example, public facilities with housing. In other proposed interventions the edges, where the forces of commercialization and neglect converge, were seen as opportunities for exchange. By superimposing a range of programmatic impulses while leaving spaces open for marginal use and appropriation, a diversity of spaces, goods and social exchange at different levels was encouraged. Other projects offered flexible structures or series of events, to generate social activities in otherwise desolate areas.

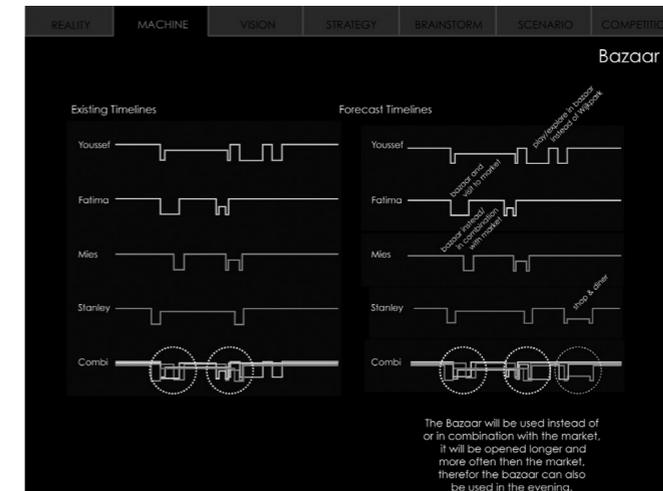
Also in less extreme cases, this notion of perspective, seeing through the eyes of another character, proves a very valuable exercise for students. With the City&Literature course, a seminar for master students I have initiated at Delft University Of Technology, I ask students to describe their site or their design from the point of view of another person, someone in a hurry, in need, at an inconvenient time or in uncomfortable circumstances. How would he or she approach and experience the site, what would be the encounter with the architecture, and with other people present at the same time and place? The change of perspective often helps students to discover characteristics of the site that they did not see with their architect’s eye, or to shine another light on their designs. Especially aspects of routing, orientation and materiality come to the fore in such exercises as experienced differently by different groups. In

385 From the students afterword in the msc3 publication *TALLINN*, Border Conditions Studio, Delft University of Technology 2004-2005.

6a



6b



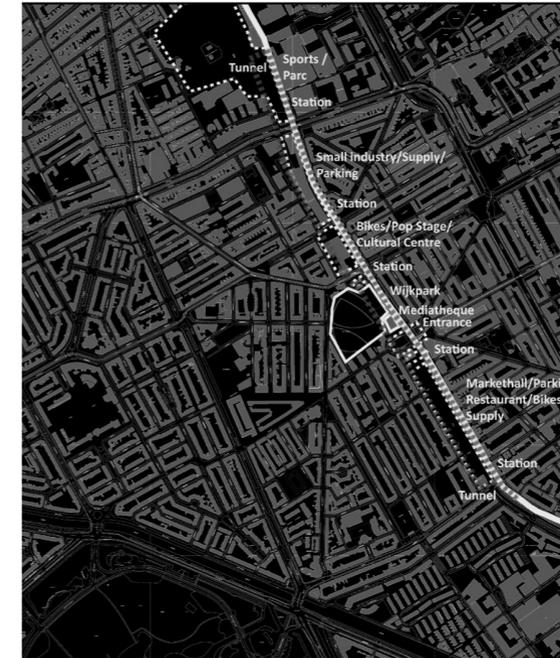
6 a+b Transvaal Transcript project. Students of the Public Realm diploma studio in 2009 investigating the interactions between different user groups by means of scripts, each depicting a day in the life of a character presenting another lifestyle. Image showing screenshots of the movies, scheme of the use of public and private spaces during the day of one of the characters; scheme of possible encounters of characters on site.

the Public Realm diploma studio of 2009, the site of investigation was a multiethnic neighbourhood in The Hague called Transvaal. The group set out to explore the meaning of public realm in the light of urban redevelopments in the area, which is currently in the process of radical restructuring. Many old housing blocks that no longer meet contemporary housing requirements have been replaced by a diversity of new housing facilities. However, during this process, inhabitants and local professionals such as the local housing corporation Staedion are confronted with a number of problems such as social segregation, un-safety and the difficulties of generating a good use of public and collective spaces.

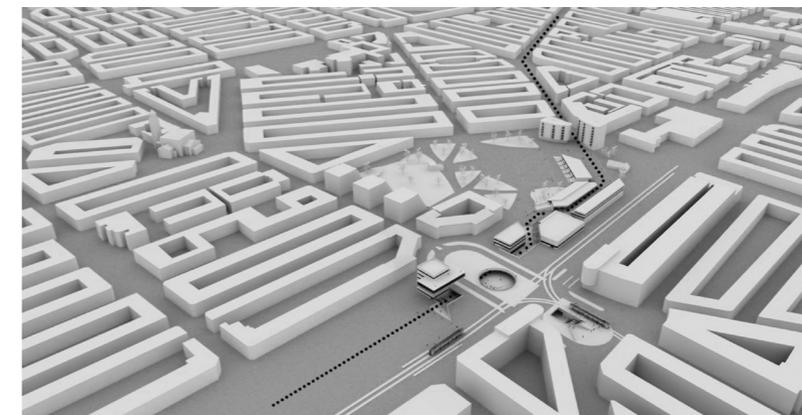
The students were asked to address such themes and to develop programmes and strategies to meet Transvaal's social, political and economic problems and needs in the twenty-first century. The architectural design assignments resulting from these programmes and strategies could involve the public realm on several levels. On the one hand, they may accommodate social, cultural and educational institutions that can function on the level of the city region as a whole. On the other, solutions could be generated for local problems, such as the lack of cultural and spatial exchange. With the help of housing corporation Staedion, the students were provided with facilities to work on site: a house in the middle of Transvaal was at their disposal for the first months of the research period, so that the students had the possibility to work on site at all times and thus become temporarily part of its social network. This allowed the students to carry out interviews with local people, and revealed how, for example, informal economy had a large influence on people's lives in the neighbourhood. One group asked a large number of inhabitants to each draw a map of what they saw as "their" neighbourhood, and transcribed this information to a map depicting the psychological distances and important denominators of the area. A small group of students used the "changing perspective" exercise throughout their "Transvaal Transcript" project.³⁸⁶ Using the demographic information about the area, they identified four types of users based on different lifestyles. For each of these user types they created a character: Youssef, an 8-year-old Turkish boy; Fatima, a Hindu mother of three children; Mies, a Dutch widow who lived most of her life in Transvaal; and Stanley, a young man with a Surinam background, who lives in Transvaal but commutes every day to his work elsewhere in the city. For each person they made a movie, depicting the activities during a 24-hour period. When would the character be in a public, and when in a private place, which routes would he or she take, which public functions (library, food market, shop, park) would be visited by them, and at which times of the day? The routes were expressed in maps and timeline diagrams, and then the diagrams of the four characters were combined. Were there any moments and places where they would meet one another? Which overlaps were present and which areas or times of the day seemed out of use? A next step was to project a number of different programmes onto a few key sites in the area, and then to redraw the diagrams. By comparing the superimpositions of diagrams for various programmes and sites, the students arrived at combinations of spaces and programmes that could have a genuine effect on the diagrams: they would increase the use of space, attract different user types and generate more chances for social encounters. For the design stage of the project, each student in this group chose a combination of site and programme(s) to further

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386 The user types based on lifestyles were derived from a diagram developed by The Smart Agent Company. The project Transvaal Transcript was carried out by the following students: Katayoun Mashoudi, Randy Zeegers, Pieter Vermeer and René Kroondijk



7a



7b

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7 a+b Proposals for urban and architectural interventions based on the Transcript exercise. Chain of Events by Randy Zeegers, Urban connector by René Kroondijk.

arriving passengers, and the underground passage strangely leading to the hotel entrance. Some hidden niches were provided in the thick walls to sit, rest or hide – places that enhance the public sphere as a place of need. Architectural details and sights generate different narratives, confrontations and multiple perspectives of different characters coming together. With her project, Laura Theng has illustrated how literary themes can serve not only as valuable perspectives from which to look at architecture in literature and vice versa, but also as operational tools in design. If one would look back at Theng's research matrix and apply the themes to study her station design, it is clearly visible that literary themes such as dialogue, narrative and perspective have been transcribed to gain a role in architectural design. The perspectives of the first ten stories provided the perceptual themes in the first models; the dialogue between the building and its users, the ones who arrive and the ones who depart, the designer and the user, has resulted in the meandering spatial structure of the plan, offering both passages and niches; the narratives are multiple: narratives of passage from the platforms, through the building, to the city and back, narratives of fragile other worlds through the bridges, narratives of possible events in the spaces which allow a multiple interpretation.

Indeed, my interest in this chapter Transcription was not in understanding transcription as a direct translation of literature to architecture, but instead in opening a new perspective to the use of literary themes in architectural research and design. What I have attempted to investigate in this chapter is the potential that lies within the experimental transgression of disciplinary boundaries of architecture and literature, in the hope of arriving at an architectural approach that is more focused on the social than on the formal, allows for experiment concerning architectural experience, and takes into account the role of the user (or reader) in the production of space. As in the previous chapter, I began with the question of definition from the perspective of literature – *what* kind of literature addresses issues of social behaviour in space, or, by extension, makes deliberate use of confrontations between space and activities? Which literary writers have sought to experiment within their discipline, and in which way did they deal with the reciprocal relationship between the writer and the user? In the second part of the chapter, I have shown *why* such issues are relevant to architects, by elaborating on the critique of theorists such as Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, that architectural discourse has often failed to accurately address questions of social practices. By discussing the arguments of De Certeau and Paul Ricoeur, I have brought literary narrative to the fore as an instrument that could provide a link to social spatial practices in architectural research and design. In the last part of the chapter, I have discussed *how* architects have used a “transcriptive” approach in their work. Following their explorations, and specifically those of Bernard Tschumi, I have intended to show that transcription indeed offers not only theoretical, but also operational concepts that can be applied to contemporary questions of social space. Such concepts, as I have shown in the discussion of educational projects, have to do with the ability to construct multiple narratives, and to allow confrontations between spaces, users and events. To conclude, reviewing the theoretical and architectural positions discussed in this chapter, I propose that it is predominantly in public space that literary qualities can be found, and achieved. Rather than in private buildings, it is in the design of public urban spaces that architecture has a task to confront, to raise questions, to generate narratives, to evoke wonder and interaction.

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10



11



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10+11 Impressions of the design of the station hall, Laura Theng

TRANSCRIPTION ~ Urban Literacy

4 PRESCRIPTION

4.1 PRESCRIPTION

4.1.1 Writing before: speculation and critique

*To cover the world, to cross it in every direction, will only ever be to know a few square meters of it . . . and with these, the sense of the worlds concreteness, irreducible, immediate, tangible of something clear and closer to us: of the world . . . as the rediscovery of a meaning, the perceiving that the earth is a form of writing, a geography of which we had forgotten that we ourselves are the authors.*³⁸⁸

Geography, the study of places, is presented here by Georges Perec as a form of writing. Indeed, geo-graphy translates literally as earth-writing, and it has been defined as “writing about the world”, “writing worlds” or “writing with worlds”.³⁸⁹ The remark that we, ourselves, are the authors of the worlds we live in, is particularly true for those involved in the design and planning of our built environment. Designers, in fact, do not only write the world they live in, but rather *pre-write* a future world. Pre-prescription can be translated as “to write before”, indeed to outline the contours of a not yet existing spatial reality – this is, to *imagine* a future reality. Indeed, it takes imagination to think about how existing spatial realities may evolve in time, and how a design can give direction to this evolution. Designing, then, understood as prescribing urban or architectural futures, is by definition an act of imagination, in which both reality and chance take part. Each artistic world, be it in literature, painting or architecture, is at least partly imaginary, and partly based on reality. Artistic prescription should thus by no means be understood as a recipe of which the effect is already known – on the contrary, precisely the *unknown* character of a future world is at stake here. In the following paragraphs I will highlight two literary themes connected to the writing of new worlds: the delicate balance between reality and imagination, and the possibility of taking a critical position through pre-prescription. First, I will discuss how literary “futures” are also critical views on the present. Then, I will elaborate on the delicate connection between the existing reality and the imaginative future by discussing literary positions searching the borders between real and imagined: surrealism and magic realism. While in surrealism the imagination is leading in artistic worlds of simultaneity and discontinuity, magic realism uncovers marvelous aspects of real places.

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A well-known literary prescription in which architecture plays a crucial role in the writers account of a future reality is Paul Scheerbart’s *Glasmarchitektur*, written in 1914.³⁹⁰ Scheerbart was fascinated by the possibilities of technology at the dawn of modernity during the early

388 Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces*, Penguin Classics, London 2008, pp. 78-79 [*Espèces d’ espace*, Editions Galilée, Paris 1974]

389 See for a more extensive discussion on geography and writing: Päivi Kymäläinen, *Geographies in writing* (dissertation), Nordia, Finland 2005, especially pp. 30-35

390 Paul Scheerbart, *Glasmarchitektur*, 1914, read in Dutch translation by Herman van Bergeijk and Kees Vollemans: *Glasmarchitectuur*, O10 Publishers, Rotterdam, 2005. English translation: Paul Scheerbart, *Glass Architecture*, Praeger Publishers, New York and Washington, 1972

years of the twentieth century. He envisioned a world in which traditional building materials such as brick and wood would make way completely for the transparency and reflection of architecture in glass and steel. In 111 small chapters, he prescribes this future world of glass, which in his eyes would be paradise on earth: “*The surface of the earth would change entirely. . . . It would seem like the earth is dressed in decoration of brilliants and enamel. That divinity is absolutely incredible!*”³⁹¹

His prescriptions include technological ones, such as ideas on aspects of heating, construction or fire safety, but also atmospherical ones, envisioning new images of cities full of glass, like a new kind of Venice, palaces of glass reflected in the water, floating on foundations of reinforced concrete. Such a floating city, in his view, would also be flexible: “*Naturally, the buildings can again and again be recomposed and slide in and out of one another, so that every floating city can look differently each day.*”³⁹²

As an architecture historian and translator of Scheerbart’s *Glasarchitektur*, Herman van Bergeijk argues that Scheerbart’s world of glass architecture is an astonishing one, in which beauty made possible by modern technology prevails. The transparency of glass and its possibilities in terms of reflection, light and colour, are imagined to offer an intensive experience of space, characterized by a sense of freedom and infinity. Scheerbart’s literary world is not only meant to enrich the experiential world of the reader, but it is also “programmatically”, aiming to set an agenda for new architecture.³⁹³ According to Van Bergeijk, Scheerbart’s world-view has to do with the incredible possibilities of the future, in which technology leads to another world, in which everything is different, a world that offers amazing new experiences of space, a world in which temporality and space are key notions.³⁹⁴

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Whereas Scheerbart presents a lyrical view of a future world, other authors have combined their spatial and temporal imagination of a future world with a critique on existing society. By definition, a writer is selective in the world he presents to his readers, the selection of elements that the writer chooses to address is in itself already a critical position towards the existing reality. Thus, the creation of an imaginary world is also an interpretation of the existing one. The writer establishes this critical stance by means of selection: by highlighting specific aspects and neglecting others, by formulating comments and speculations. Selection, then, is also a critical tool; by focusing only on certain aspects of reality, even enlarging them, one can give a critical account of society. In many novels, a scenario of a future world is constructed on the basis of the author’s interpretations of reality. In the novel *Blokken (Blocks)*, for example, Dutch writer Ferdinand Bordewijk presented a scenario of a future world in a genuine architectural prescription.³⁹⁵ The totalitarian world in *Blokken* knows only angles of 90 degrees, any curved shape that might remind one of nature is banned from the ideally constructed world. Here, the right angle represents the rationality of the future world, the reign of rationality over intuition. A similar topic is presented in a number of other literary futures. Often, the

391 Paul Scheerbart, *Glasarchitectuur*, 2005 [1914], p. 28 (translation from Dutch KMH)

392 Ibidem, p. 68 (translation from Dutch KMH)

393 Herman van Bergeijk, *Paul Scheerbart, fantast tussen fronten* [visionary between frontiers], afterword in the Dutch edition: *Glasarchitectuur*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam, 2005, pp. 122-139

394 Herman van Bergeijk ibidem, p.127, 131

395 F. Bordewijk, *Blokken; Knorrende Beesten; Bint*, Nijgh & Van Ditmar, Den Haag 1985 [1931]

rational and the intuitive are represented by two different characters, but they could also be two parallel spatial and temporal dimensions. Written in 1948, George Orwell’s novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* presents a doom scenario of a society subject to the most severe system of absolute control. The book describes the future Britain (Oceania) of 1984, in which Party members, working in giant buildings, all wearing the same uniforms, stand under continuous control of cameras and Party propaganda, meant to be deprived from any sign of individuality or human emotions. In this new world, the world after the Revolution, the past is continuously rewritten, so that the Party is and has always been right. Meanwhile, some remnants exist of the old world of the people living in poor and dilapidated areas of London – a world in which people are still attached to memories and emotions.

*This, he thought with a sort of vague distaste – this was London, chief city of Airstrip One, itself the most populous of the provinces of Oceania. . . . Were there always these vistas of rotting nineteenth-century houses, their sides shored up with baulks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs with corrugated iron, their crazy garden walls sagging in all directions? . . . The Ministry of Truth . . . was startlingly different from any other object in sight. It was an enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete, soaring up, terrace after terrace, 300 metres into the air. . . . The Ministry of Truth contained, it was said, three thousand rooms above ground level, and corresponding ramifications below.*³⁹⁶

Apart from a vision of the future, this novel is also a critique on specific aspects of existing reality in 1948. Orwell’s selective use of elements of society – in this case the increasing amount of control in society, is exaggerated in such a way that it is still recognizable and imaginable. The effect is made stronger by placing the images of the new world in contrast with the envisioned decline of the existing reality of London’s nineteenth-century quarters. The suspense in this novel is achieved by precisely this act of selection of known elements – depicting a horrifying future that is not totally unimaginable. Indeed, parts of Orwell’s world, such as the high amount of surveillance cameras in public spaces have become reality, some 30 years after the year that was still a distant future at the time the book was published.

Whereas Orwell’s critical spatial imaginations depict a possible future world, those of Franz Kafka, such as the village in *The Castle*, rather recall images of traditional spaces, as the protagonist K. recognizes upon his arrival in the village. Here, it is not the spaces themselves, but the psychological constraints embedded in the spaces and the actions of their inhabitants that offer a speculation on a society ruled by bureaucracy. The novel describes the frustrating attempts to reach a destiny that is in sight, while the path towards it is hindered by invisible obstacles. The spatial description of K.’s arrival in the village already hints at the impossibility of him ever reaching his goal:

So he resumed his walk, but the way proved long. For the street he was in, the main street of the village, did not lead up to the Castle hill, it only made towards it and then, as if deliberately, turned aside, and though it did not lead away from the Castle, it got no nearer to it either. At every turn K. expected the road to double back to the Castle, and only because of this expectation did he go on; he was flatly unwilling, tired as he was, to leave the street, and he was also amazed at the length of the village, which

396 George Orwell, *Nineteen eighty-four*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1965 [1949], pp. 6-7

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*seemed to have no end; again and again the same little houses, and frost-bound window-panes and snow and the entire absence of human beings . . .*³⁹⁷

K. never reaches the castle of his destiny, though it is known and can be seen from the village in which his stay becomes an endless dealing with bureaucracies. In this selection of one aspect of modern urban society, the novel indeed presents a sharp critique.

Likewise, the novels of contemporary French writer Michel Houellebecq can be read as cynical critiques on contemporary society, by offering scenarios of a possible future situation. His descriptions are scary as they are sometimes only exaggerations of existing practices, or practices easily imaginable in a near future. In *The Possibility of an Island*, for example, the protagonist buys a luxurious home on the Spanish coast.³⁹⁸ The colonization of these areas, with a focus on leisure, hedonism and sex, is a recognizable phenomenon, currently taking place. The novel describes the end of humanity – the twenty-first-century culture of superficiality, hedonism, leisure and sex is brought to the extreme, leading to the end of culture, the end of a public realm, the end of civilization. A small part of mankind remains, back to live in naive, prehistoric conditions, while another part has started in the late twentieth century to provide a new, clean and safe future, without physical constraints. The protagonist, Daniel, is one of the lucky few who has been reproduced in order to survive over generations in every time a new and improved body. The 25th version of Daniel only vaguely remembers the human emotions of his predecessor – but of course, as the reader well understands, longs for them, despite the perfection of his totally programmed identity. The vast territory of Spain has been almost completely changed through desertification, the cities, formerly centres of high culture, are merely ruins. In one of his essays, Houellebecq explains that he sees literature as a way to reveal the weak spots in society. His task, as a writer, is to put his finger on the wounds and press with force.³⁹⁹

4.1.2 Writing beyond: imagining situations

While the before mentioned writers offer critical accounts of reality by their prescriptions of possible future worlds, surrealist writers attempted to search beyond reality to fully employ the power of imagination. The surrealists critiqued the realistic approach in society in general and in literature specifically. They searched for alternatives for the in their eyes boring, factual descriptions of literature at the time, and were inspired by the irrational connections of childhood thoughts, as for a child the “absence of any known restrictions allow him the perspective

397 Franz Kafka, *Das Schloss* (1926), English translation by Willa and Edwin Muir: *The Castle* in: Franz Kafka, *The Complete Novels* Vintage Classics, London 1999, p. 282 [first published in English in this translation in 1930, Secher&Warburg].

398 Michel Houellebecq, *La possibilité d'une île*, Fayard, Paris, 2005, read in Dutch translation as *De mogelijkheid van een eiland*, De Arbeiderspers, Amsterdam 2005

399 Michel Houellebecq, *Leven, lijden, schrijven/ methode*, Voetnoot, Antwerp 2003 [original in French as *Rester vivant - méthode*, Editions de la Différence, 1991]

of several lives lived at once”.⁴⁰⁰ Indeed, in the world of a child, simultaneity and the possibility of multiple perspectives are only natural, while in the later stages of life reason tends to disqualify such connections. The state of relaxation that the mind reaches in dreams or *revery*⁴⁰¹ could also produce a similar flow of images, unhindered by reason. In the first *Manifesto of Surrealism*, written in 1924, André Breton holds a plea to abandon the restrictions of reason in order to discover the productive capacity of the mind. The interest in that which lies beyond the real (sur-real) does not necessarily imply a negation of the real. Rather, it aims for a “resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a *surreality*”.⁴⁰² Indeed, like in poetry or in architectural experience, as I have argued in the previous chapters,⁴⁰³ there is a moment of experience in which seemingly contradictory notions come together. Breton describes this point, which can be seen as the “motivating force in the activities of the surrealists”,⁴⁰⁴ as “a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and present, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions”.⁴⁰⁵

The coming together of two contradictory elements, according to Breton, manifests itself as a “spark”, a sudden moment, when the partial absence of reason allows for unexpected connections. Reason is only necessary for “taking note of, and appreciating, the luminous phenomenon”.⁴⁰⁶ Even though Breton suggested that “everything is valid when it comes to obtaining the desired suddenness from certain associations”,⁴⁰⁷ the surrealists did develop methods to reach this state of mind, to rule out rational thought in creative processes, and to allow for these sparks of poetic imagination. One method, especially suitable for literary production, is *automatic writing*, or, more precise, “pure psychic automatism”, which simply implies that one starts writing without hesitation, without stopping to read, control or judge the just written. The aim is to let the images occur spontaneously, by random association, like a “flow from a spring that one need only go search for fairly deep down within oneself, a flow whose course one cannot direct, for if one does it is sure to dry up immediately”.⁴⁰⁸ Another method used in surrealist writing is the *narrated dream* – indeed a way to capture a similar subconscious flow of thought without editing. As a third surrealist technique, correspond-

400 André Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)”, in André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan Press, 2010 (1969), p. 3

401 The work of Sigmund Freud on dream analysis, was therefore looked upon by the Surrealists with high interest. Daydreaming, or *revery*, is also a core notion in Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*. See also chapter Description.

402 André Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)”, in André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan Press, 2010 (1969), p. 14

403 See the discussion of the moment of “poetic experience” as defined by Bachelard, in the chapter Description, and the discussion of Tschumi's architectural moment of “transgression” in the chapter Transcription.

404 André Breton, “Second Manifesto of Surrealism (1930)”, in: André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan Press, 2010 (1969), p. 124

405 André Breton, “Second Manifesto of Surrealism (1930)”, *ibidem*, p. 123

406 André Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)”, *ibidem*, p. 37

407 *Ibidem*, p. 41

408 André Breton, “On Surrealism in its Living Works (1953)”, in *ibidem*, p. 298

ences between two elements are often expressed in *metaphors*. Another technique that has been used by surrealist writers is that of *random assemblage*, which exists in bringing together fragments of text, for example from newspaper headlines, fragments of poems and so forth.⁴⁰⁹

By these means, even the most recognizable spatial descriptions obtain a certain awkwardness. The surrealist novel *Paris Peasant* by Louis Aragon, for example, starts off to describe the Passage de l'Opéra in Paris by means of evoking images of the spatial pattern of the arcade, revealing details of the shops and bars inside, of the hotel and the lodging house, and at some point lets these seemingly objective descriptions evolve into flares of oneiric imagination:

My attention was suddenly attracted by a sort of humming noise which seemed to be coming from the direction of the cane shop, and I was astonished to see that its window was bathed in a greenish, almost submarine light, the source of which remained invisible. . . . I recognized the sound: it was the same voice of the seashells that has never ceased to amaze poets and film-stars. The whole ocean in the Passage de l'Opéra. The canes floated gently like seaweed. I had still not recovered from my enchantment when I noticed that a human form was swimming among the various levels of the window display. Although not quite as tall as an average woman, she did not in the least give the impression of being a dwarf. Her smallness seemed, rather, to derive from distance, and yet the apparition was moving about just behind the windowpane. Her hair floated behind her, her fingers occasionally clutched at one of the canes.⁴¹⁰

The further the reader gets into the pages of *Paris Peasant*, the more the realistic descriptions merge with interruptions, fragments of newspapers, images of daydreaming, absurd dialogues and metaphors. Even the "Passage de l'Opéra" itself is at some point presented as "a big glass coffin",⁴¹¹ and the shops of hairdressers or the bath houses give way to reflections about "dangerous daydreams" and the powerful contrast of "a sense of intimacy in the very center of a public place".⁴¹² The merging of imagination and reality, which Breton claimed was the ultimate goal of surrealism, indeed takes place within this book, within the detailed description of the urban space of the passage:

*At the level of the printer who prints cards while you wait, just beyond the little flight of steps leading down to the Rue Chaptal . . . in the farthest reaches of the two kinds of daylight which pity the reality of the outside world against the subjectivism of the passage, let us pause for a moment . . . let us pause in this strange zone where all is distraction, distraction of attention as well as inattention, so as to experience this vertigo. The double illusion which holds us here is confronted with the desire for absolute knowledge. Here the two great movements of the spirit are equivalent and all interpretations of the world have lost their power over me. Two universes begin to fade at their point of contact . . .⁴¹³
. . . Reverie imposes its presence, unaided. Here, surrealism resumes all its right. . . . Images flutter down like confetti. Images, images everywhere.⁴¹⁴*

409 This technique became most known through the related Dada poets.

410 Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, translated by Simon Watson Taylor, Exact Exchange, Boston 1994 (1971), [original version: Louis Aragon, *Le Paysan de Paris*, Editions Gallimard, Paris 1926], pp.21-22

411 Ibidem, p. 34

412 Ibidem, p. 53

413 Ibidem, p. 47

414 Ibidem, p. 81

Even if the book presents the most detailed descriptions of the passage, in fact the passage, as Aragon admits in the text, is an excuse for daydreaming, for letting the images flow – the space itself has become an *oneiric* passage, "a method of freeing myself of certain inhibitions, a means of obtaining access to a hitherto forbidden realm".⁴¹⁵

In surrealist literature, the organization of space and time is thus fragmented: events take place simultaneously, and spatial images overlap without any causal relation.

4.1.3 Writing between: reality and imagination

Surrealism was not limited to literary writing alone. In Paris, the centre of surrealism in the 1930s, writers such as Breton, Eluard and Aragon stood in close contact with sculptors and painters, such as Belgian painter Magritte and Spanish artist Salvador Dalí. This interdisciplinary interest resulted in a productive cross-fertilization of their works.⁴¹⁶ Though most known for his painting, Dalí had a strong interest in other disciplines, and extended his activities to writing, making objects and designing theatre stage sets. Because Dalí translated the methods of surrealist literature to the production of visual images, I will discuss his position in more detail. In his early autobiography, Dalí criticizes the cold and rational architecture of international modernism: "Everything was on the same level, everything was becoming uniform as it became internationalized."⁴¹⁷ Against this homogeneity and rationality of modernism, Dalí placed the irrational and the multiple. For Dalí, nothing was what it seemed at first sight. He referred frequently to the double images that landscapes can bear, as rocks can look like faces or animals. It was these perceptions of natural phenomena, with their capacity of stirring the imagination, that became a model for Dalí's own thinking: "relativistic, changing at the slightest displacement in the space of the spirit, becoming constantly their own opposite, dissembling, ambivalent, hypocritical, disguised, vague and concrete, without dream, without 'mist of wonder', measurable, observable, physical, objective, material and hard as granite."⁴¹⁸ As Dalí was well aware of the techniques of the surrealist writers, it is interesting to see how he interpreted such techniques as narrated dreams and automatic writing into methods that could lead to images, objects and spaces. Dalí describes, for example, his "surrealist objects" as:

"the irrational objects, the object with a symbolic function . . . absolutely useless from the practical and rational point of view, created wholly for the purpose of materializing in a fetishistic

415 Ibidem, p. 88

416 This influence reached also outside Paris, and extended over the next decades. The Dutch magazine *Barbarer* (1958-1972), for example by the authors J.Bernlef, G. Brandts and K.Schippers, was highly inspired by surrealists works, and presented ready-made poetry from advertisements, user manuals and errant lists, phonetically birdsounds.

417 Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* [Vie Secrète de Salvador Dalí], Dover Publication INC., New York 1993 [Dial Press, New York 1942], p.285

418 Ibidem, p.305

way, with the maximum of tangible reality, ideas and fantasies having a delirious character.”⁴¹⁹ However, Dalí did not see such objects as totally subjective. On the contrary, he looked for a rational, methodical way of using his “delirious” ideas, and searched for “the esthetic hierarchization of irrational imagination”.⁴²⁰

“The critical-paranoiac interpretation of the images that involuntary strike my perception, or the fortuitous events that occur in the course of my days, or the so frequent and so violent phenomena of “objective hazard” that cast enigmatic rays of light over the most insignificant of my acts – the interpretation of all of this, I repeat, is nothing other than the interpretative reading, which is capable of giving an objective coherence to the signs, omens, avatars, divinations, presentiments and superstitions which are the very sustenance of all ‘personal magic’.”⁴²¹

With the paranoid critical method, Dalí introduced an approach that exceeded literary writing, and that, instead of focusing only on the unconscious production of images, also offered a key to the interpretation of real and surreal events. By extension, it can be productive on a larger scale of urban and architectural thought as well. Rem Koolhaas interpreted Dalí’s paranoid critical method in his book *Delirious New York*, and has made use of it in his architectural work. This will be further explored in the last part of the chapter.

Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier took part in the group of surrealist writers and artists in Paris in the 1930s. On his return to Latin America, he discovered that the marvellous situations that the surrealists were so eagerly trying to construct were already present in the reality of Latin America. Latin American countries, with their abundant nature and their complex histories characterized by simultaneity and discontinuity, were full of marvel. The marvellous, then, is something to be found rather than to be constructed:

“The marvelous begins to be unmistakably marvelous when it arises from an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), from a privileged revelation of reality, an unaccustomed insight that is singularly favored by the unexpected richness of reality or an amplification of the scale and categories of reality perceived with particular intensity by virtue of an exaltation of the spirit that leads it to a kind of extreme state.”⁴²²

Carpentier thus called upon his fellow Latin American writers to use the surrealist methods of automatic writing and narrating dreams, to look for the marvellous in reality: “It is our duty to depict this world, we must uncover and interpret it ourselves. Our reality will appear new to our eyes.”⁴²³ The term *Marvelous Real*, which Carpentier introduced in 1949,⁴²⁴ has remained

419 Ibidem, p.312

420 Ibidem, p.378

421 Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* [Vie Secrète de Salvador Dalí], Dover Publication INc. , New York 1993 [Dial Press, New York 1942], p.370

422 Alejo Carpentier, “On the Marvelous Real in America” (1949), published in: Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Duke University Press, Durham 1995, p.p. 85-86

423 Alejo Carpentier, “Baroque and the Marvelous Real”, lecture held in Caracas, 1975, published in: Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Duke University Press, Durham 1995, p. 106

424 Alejo Carpentier, “On the Marvelous Real in America” (1949), in: Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Duke University Press, Durham 1995, p. 76-88

a key notion in the literary production in Latin American countries since the 1950s. Indeed, writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar, Gabriel García Márquez and Isabel Allende succeeded in expressing the magic in the reality of Latin American places and cultures. The depictions of the marvellous real as encountered in their books are generally related to spatial settings: a house or a village is often the focal point of a large number of extraordinary events. The history of the Buendia family in García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* can also be read as a history of place. All events in the narrative are centred on the patio of the family house, in the fictive village of Macondo. As such, the novel combines evocative descriptions of the nineteenth-century Latin-American town (the heat of the Caribbean climate, the colonial architecture, the dust in the backstreets, the threats of storms, diseases, heat, civil war, the animals and carriages), with marvellous histories and symbols. Particularly interesting is the role of time in this novel: though the narrative of the hundred years of family history seems to be ordered chronologically, there are several occasions when time detaches itself from a linear order. This is shown by the dead, who remain present in the house and are able to communicate with some family members; by the small room in which it is always a Monday in March, and which seems untouched by the decay and dust of the passing of time; by the strong similarities between events and characters – in such a way that they seem to repeat themselves in time. Towards the end of the novel, the mystery of the events of the Buendía’s is found to be written in the ancient manuscripts of a gypsy who witnessed the early years of the house: *Aureliano had never been more lucid in any act of his life as when he forgot about his dead ones and the pain of his dead ones and nailed up the doors and windows again with Fernanda’s crossed boards so as not to be disturbed by any temptations of the world, for he knew then that his fate was written in Melquiádes’ parchments. He found them intact among the prehistoric plants and steaming puddles and luminous insects that had removed all trace of man’s passage on earth from the room, and he did not have the calmness to bring them out into the light, but right there, standing, without the slightest difficulty, as if they had been written in Spanish and were being read under the dazzling splendour of high noon, he began to decipher them aloud. It was the history of the family, written by Melquiádes, down to the most trivial details, one hundred years ahead of time. . . . Melquiádes had not put events in the order of man’s conventional time, but had concentrated a century of daily episodes, in such a way that they coexisted in one instant.*⁴²⁵

While Marquez’s history is a fictional one, beyond it is a sharp observation of real life in northern Colombia. This type of literary construction in South-American literature is generally named Magic Realism, a term first used for a new kind of figurative painting,⁴²⁶ which aimed to unveil the magic aspect of reality. The magic realism of Latin American literature also reverberated in Europe. The descriptions of Antwerp’s harbour by Belgian writer Hubert

425 Gabriel García Márquez, *Cien años de soledad*, Editorial sudamericanos, Buenos Aires, 1967, English translation by Carlos Fuentes: *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Everyman’s Library, Cambell Publishers, London 1995, p.414 [first published in English by Harper&Row, New York 1970]

426 The German art critic Franz Roh coined the term in 1925 for a return in painting to the ‘delight’ of reality after the abstraction of expressionism. In painting, the term has been frequently used ever since. In Dutch painting, for example, painters such as Carel Willink and Charley Toorop have been very successful as “magic realists”. Franz Roh, “Magic Realism: post-expressionism” (1925), in: Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Duke University Press, Durham 1995, pp. 15-32

Lampo,⁴²⁷ for example, are saturated with myth. More recently, Angolan-Portuguese writer José Eduardo Agualusa has offered valuable descriptions of existing places, precisely by revealing the connection to the magical and the absurd, for example in the tale of a “dealer in memories” in Angola.⁴²⁸ In his novel *My Father’s Wives*, the protagonists travel through African cities and landscapes, which seem to be as much alive as the many characters featured in the novel.⁴²⁹

The heightened reality perception that is so characteristic of magic realistic literature can be valuable to architects. Researcher Ricardo Castro correctly states that “marvelous-real, first conceived as a strategy to describe existing reality, would also seem appropriate to *construct* it”.⁴³⁰ The awareness that places can contain multiple layers of time, history and events, is useful for those meant to construct new accounts of these places by means of design.

4.2 WRITING PLACES

4.2.1 Architectural imaginations and critiques

160 For this argument about the “prescriptive” possibilities for architecture, I have first drawn on the possibilities in literature to critically address reality, to search beyond reality, and to explore the balance between real and imagined.

In the next part of this chapter, I will discuss a number of “architectural prescriptions”, and show how architects and urban designers have positioned themselves vis-à-vis this balance between the real and the imagined in urban critique and design. The construction of a new situation demands that the designer develop a particular view on time and space. Like the author in literary prescription, the designer also takes a selective position, which establishes the intellectual frame through which the work is constructed. I will therefore draw on the notion of *chronotope*, the spatiotemporal frame that writers employ as a selective mechanism in constructing their literary world-view. I will argue that, similarly, architects make use of such intellectual frameworks in their architectural prescriptions, and highlight how consid-

427 Hubert Lampo, for example: *De komst van Joachim Stiller* [The Coming of Joachim Stiller], Meulenhof, Amsterdam 1960

428 José Eduardo Agualusa, *O Vendedor de Passados*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 2004 [translated as: The Book of Chameleons, Arcadia Books, London, 2006]; Interview with the author in NRC Handelsblad, March 20, 2009, *Boeken*, p. 4

429 José Eduardo Agualusa, *My father’s wives*, Arcadia Books, London, 2008 [original: *As mulheres do meu pai*, Editora Língua Geral, Rio de Janeiro, 2007], read in Dutch: *De vrouwen van mijn vader*, Meulenhoff, Amsterdam 2009

430 Ricardo L. Castro claims that the work of Colombian architect Rogelio Salmons clearly bears influence of magic realistic literature. Ricardo L. Castro, ‘Architecture and Literature: The Syncretic Work of Rogelio Salmons’, in: *Proceedings of the 82nd Annual Meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture*, ACSA Press, Washington DC, 1994, pp.255-260, (www.arch.mcgill.ca/prof/castro/serlio/sal.htm, accessed 11-04-2005)

erations of temporality such as simultaneity, chance and indeterminacy can also play a productive role in architectural thought and design.

In the following paragraphs I wish to shine a light on some architectural precedents of a prescriptive approach to developing new situations. Especially around the 1960s, a number of avant-garde groups of artists and architects experimented with prescriptive themes by developing radical scenarios for urban and architectural futures, or by letting aspects of chance and indeterminacy play a role in their designs.⁴³¹ My aim is not to idealize these groups, but rather to highlight some of the guiding techniques they borrowed from literature in creating imaginative scenarios and critiques. Even though their scenarios were hardly ever realistic, and they never succeeded (or were not even interested) in turning them into spatial realities, their critical and playful investigations served a great role in stirring the debate – and still do today. In her study on 1960s architecture, researcher Lara Schrijver states that an important contribution of groups such as the Situationists International and Archigram was to construct a “critical moment, the discovery of a technique or an aesthetic that can help revise our cultural perceptions”.⁴³² Such techniques were the *dérive* and *detournement* that the situationists employed in their explorations of the city, or the pop-art aesthetics that the members of Archigram discovered as a means to express their optimism about new technologies for future living environments. For my argument, I will focus on the literary approach these groups applied. An example of the use of literary techniques to construct both an urban critique and new scenarios for urban situations was provided in the late 1950s by the *Situationiste Internationale* group, an interdisciplinary fellowship, originating among the literary group Lettrists International and a number of artist collectives such as the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus.⁴³³ Their work was rooted in a critique on the state of urbanism at the time; they found modernist urban planning too formalistic. They argued that due to such rational planning tools as the zoning of functions, the dynamics of urban life was lost, and with it the richness of human encounters, the possibilities to wander around in the city, guided by imagination and chance. In their writings, the situationists expressed their critiques and offered directions as to how life should be brought back into the city. Their texts were polemic, clearly expressing their critical stance towards urban planning, such as Constant’s text *Another City, Another Life*. About the new, concrete housing neighbourhoods of the time, Constant wrote: “Cemeteries of reinforced concrete are being constructed in which great masses of the population are condemned to die of boredom. So what use are the extraordinary technological inventions the world now has at its disposal, if the conditions are lacking to profit from them, if

431 See for an extensive study of these practices also: Lara Schrijver, *Radical Games. Popping the Bubble of 1960’s Architecture*, Nai Publishers, Rotterdam, 2009

432 Lara Schrijver, *ibidem*, p.28

433 The Danish painter Asger Jorn, for example, took part in the well known CoBrA movement, but also in an artist collective which aimed to bring new life to the Bauhaus with The International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus. Also a British artists collective was involved: the London Psychogeographic Committee. See for a concise description of SI’s birth Libero Andreotti’s introduction to Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa (eds.), *Theory of the Dérive and Other Situationist Writings on the City*, Barcelona 1996, pp. 7-9

they add nothing to leisure, if imagination is wanting?”⁴³⁴ Other situationist texts were written in a rather dreamy literary style. The writings of Gilles Ivain, for example, are in themselves already imaginative wanderings through urban “ambiances”, as the situationists called it. Ivain’s *Formulary for a New Urbanism* reveals his “new vision of time and space”, featuring: . . . cities assembling . . . buildings charged with evocative power, symbolic edifices representing desires, forces, events past, present and to come. . . . Everyone will live in his own personal “cathedral” . . . there will be rooms more conducive to dreams than any drug, and houses where one cannot help but love . . . This city could be envisaged in the form of an arbitrary assemblage of castles, grottos, lakes, etc. . . . The districts of this city could correspond to the whole spectrum of diverse feelings that one encounters by chance in everyday life.⁴³⁵

This new “unitary urbanism” was thought to create a more active, creative involvement by inhabitants by means of “the complex, ongoing activity which consciously recreates man’s environment . . . it is the fruit of a new type of collective creativity”.⁴³⁶ With this collective creativity, the situationists tried to re-establish a relationship between the city and everyday life by means of creating “situations” upon which the individual is forced to act. One of the key methods to construct such situations was the *dérive*, a wandering expedition through the city, not led by any standard geographical map but by disorienting movements. In a playful way, the *dérive* investigates the psychogeographical effects of the city. It aims to provoke different ways of experiencing the urban structure.⁴³⁷ The *dérive* made it possible to jettison the usual motivations for moving about a city and investigate the psychogeographical effects of the city in a playful way. The objective was to bring out the experience of urban space in various ways. Through the *dérive*, one played a game with the experience of the city by approaching it from unexpected angles, letting aspects of chance guide their explorations. It was Dutchman Constant Nieuwenhuijs who provided a three-dimensional elaboration of situationist thinking with his vision of a future urban society *New Babylon*⁴³⁸ in models, drawings and text. With *New Babylon*, he offered a view of an alternative world in which leisure, wandering,

434 Constant, “Another city for another life”, in Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa (eds.), *Theory of the Dérive and Other Situationist Writings on the City*, Barcelona 1996, p. 92 [originally published in *Internationale Situationiste*#2, December 1958, pp.37-40]

Some of my notes on this subject have appeared in a much earlier version in Klaske Havik, “Lived experience, places read: toward an urban literacy”, in Grafe, Havik, Maaskant (eds.) *OASE70 Architecture & Literature. Reflections / Imaginations*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2006, pp. 37-49

435 Gilles Ivain (Ivan Chtcheglov), “Formulary for a new urbanism” in Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa (eds.), *Theory of the Dérive and Other Situationist Writings on the City*, Barcelona 1996, p. 15 [written 1953, published in its original version in *Internationale Situationiste* #1, June 1958]

436 Constant and Guy Debord, “The Amsterdam Declaration”, in: Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa (eds.), *Theory of the Dérive and Other Situationist Writings on the City*, Barcelona 1996, p. 80 [originally published in *Internationale Situationiste*#2, December 1958]

437 Guy Debord, in Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa (eds.), *Theory of the Dérive and Other Situationist Writings on the City*, Barcelona 1996 [originally published in Potlach, 1955].

438 In a later stage, however, Guy Debord, one of the leading figures of the Situationists, distanced himself from *New Babylon*, claiming it would be too fixed an image. See for an extensive discussion of Constant’s work in relation to the Situationists International: Mark Wigley (ed.), *Constant Nieuwenhuijs: The Hyperarchitecture of Desire*, Rotterdam, 1999

dreaming and chance play leading roles. As a playing nomad,⁴³⁹ man would move through this city and continuously change his living environment. *New Babylon* was thus a city in which the construction of new situations would continuously take place. This spatial experience connected to the creation of moments closely relates to Lefebvre’s thinking. It comes as no surprise that there was a mutual interest between Lefebvre and the Situationists International. Lefebvre wrote: “Space is active . . . This is what Constant called an architecture of ambiance . . . the creation of situations . . . the construction of spaces that are the creators of ambiance, emotion, situation, what I called a theory of *moments*.”⁴⁴⁰ With this strong temporal dimension, Constant’s spatial *prescription* can be described in terms of chronotope. Spatially, it offers a virtually endless framework, extending above existing cities and landscapes, without borders and constantly mutating. The role of time is focused on the momentary, the active use of chance, the creation of different moments of changing experiences. As such, the chronotope of *New Babylon* can also be seen as a critical framework: with this scenario, Constant indeed expressed a critique on the modern city in which such moments no longer seemed to happen, replacing it with a more vibrant city, in which momentary events are made possible, and in which space can be used in sudden and unexpected ways.

Another artistic group that combined an interest in text and architectural and urban scenarios was a group of young architects who gathered on the editorial board of a magazine called *Archigram*, the first issue of which appeared in 1961.⁴⁴¹ The name *Archi-gram* already hints at the combination of architecture and textual communication; grammar. The issues of the magazine featured prophetic scenarios in pop art style imagery. They were strongly influenced by the political and philosophical context of the time: avant-garde practices in life-style, pop art and cinema, the thoughts of Levi-Strauss and Foucault, and the fast development of technology. Themes such as time, movement and situation were at the core of *Archigram*’s proposals. From literature, the members of *Archigram* borrowed the radical approach of science fiction and the imagery of comic strips. They saw in these sources an alternative to the mainstream, rational approach, and translated the radical views to imaginative new spatial futures, fully equipped with the most excessive technologies to construct the most comfortable conditions for the new urban dweller. Where Constant and the Situationists International focused on the experience of the city, *Archigram* showed a deep interest in product design: architecture and city were seen from the perspective of consumer culture, and conceived as consumer products. The designs of *Archigram* were not open, as in the situationist approach, but were instead very strongly defined: detailed designs for inflatable suits, capsules for living and other amazing machines. Even the city was approached as an object, even a character in itself: *The Walking City* (1964), for example, consisted of moveable objects housing urban facilities. Thus, as opposed to Constant’s *New Babylon* in which design was fundamentally

439 With his interest in “play” as an essential human need, Constant was indebted to Johan Huizinga: *Homo Ludens. Proeve eener bepaling van het spelelement der cultuur*, H.D. Tjeenk Willink, Haarlem 1938, translated in English as Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. Routledge, London, 2003. For a contemporary reading of “play”, see also Quentin Stevens, *The Ludic City; exploring the potential of public spaces*, Routledge, London 2007

440 Henri Lefebvre *Le temps de méprise*, 1975, p.157, quoted in Edward Soja, *Thirdspace* (op. cit. note 74), p.50

441 Peter Cook (ed.) *Archigram*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1999

open, employed to create diverse, unexpected situations, Archigram produced architectural and urban prescriptions in the form of strongly defined images. One could say that in Archigram's prescriptions, the objects rather than their users or inhabitants (houses, machines, complete cities) were presented as the main protagonists. In Italy, the collective Superstudio was founded in 1966. Less focused on objects and technology, the members of Superstudio also proposed radical scenarios, inspired by literary and cinematographic techniques. Their projects, which were not limited to architectural design, but included collages, film scripts, furniture and texts feature existential literary themes such as life, love and death – themes that architecture, they complain, never addresses. Architecture all too often “intervenes only at a certain point in the process, usually when behavior has already been codified, furnishing answers to rigidly stated problems”.⁴⁴² Against this limited role of architecture as a mere problem-solving discipline in a rationally organized society, they proposed to introduce more poetry and irrationality in architecture. Their language is dreamlike, at times surreal. In *The Fundamental Acts*, they write:

*Upon my arrival one day in a foreign (but not completely unknown) country, I noticed from posters and newspapers that the official opening of a monumental building was about to take place . . . At the centre of the city, and enormous open space with regular borders had been cleared. In this open space, images of mountains and deserts were forming . . . Innumerable spectators were already sitting on folding chairs . . . and all were turned facing the same direction and wearing large glasses . . . Behind them, a rainbow was appearing and disappearing by turns. At the point towards which everybody's eyes were directed lay and enormous human figure . . . The figure seemed to be connected to a complicated piece of apparatus that reacted in various ways to the small movements of his arms and legs. Unexpectedly, the rainbow vanished completely and four rectangular buildings appeared at the four cardinal points. These buildings has certainly emerged from beneath the earth by means of hydraulic mechanisms. All the onlookers, leaving their chairs, formed four different corteges, and set off towards the buildings.*⁴⁴³

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Superstudio's scenarios, like Constant's New Babylon, depict a society in which people move freely, like nomads, being able to settle anywhere. Their *Supersurface*, for example, is a borderless place, extending over the whole surface of the earth. Here and there are connection points, into which technical equipment can be plugged. Although the scenarios of Constant, Superstudio and Archigram served mainly as radical critiques on the boring rationality of modernist society and their proposals never reached nor were intended to reach the status of designs to be realized,⁴⁴⁴ some architects have attempted to include similar themes and objectives in more realistic architectural scenarios.

Hungarian-French architect Yona Friedman, is also intrigued by the technological possibili-

442 From the project Superstudio, *The Fundamental Acts (life-ceremony-education-love-death)* 1971-1973, re-published in Martin van Schaik and Ottokar Máçel (eds.) *Exit Utopia. Architectural Provocations 1956-1976*, Prestel, Munich 2005. This fragment was also re-published in *Architectural Positions*, SUN 2009, p. 351

443 Superstudio, *The Fundamental Acts / Ceremony*, ibidem, p.356

444 Though, one could argue, some of their visionary proposals have come close to reality if we consider that now, some 50 years later, the individual freedom of movement has increased enormously, and plug-in connections points for technical equipment, just to name one of their many inventions, have become part of our everyday lives.

ties of the future. He argues that surprisingly, many conflicts in society arise out of a belief of the eternity of rules and system and institutions. Friedman therefore proposes alternative, more flexible solutions that can take change into account. His point of departure is the freedom of the individual; personal mobility and temporality are the core themes of his spatial thought. Friedman's prescriptive approach entails recipes that call for improvisation, rather than plans. His 1958 project *L'Architecture Mobile*⁴⁴⁵ sketches a scenario for a flexible, mobile architecture which offers individual freedom to its users in time. This is achieved through the use of modular building systems, in which elements are interchangeable, as well as through a well-connected network of infrastructure.⁴⁴⁶ A literally “scriptive” proposal is his *Flatwriter*,⁴⁴⁷ an interactive tool for the design of houses. It consists of a keyboard presenting a number of basic acts, such as the addition of rooms, spaces, rotation. In fact, the tool represents a kind of grammar, with spatial steps instead of words and letters. A script is then defined by a set of rules. By these means, alternative scenarios for individual inhabitants can be constructed. This idea of scenario is also present in Friedman's mode of presentation: the projects are often visualized in the form of storyboards; a mode of representation as well as of production.

More recently, Raoul Bunschoten, architect of CHORA, used scenarios in his work on urban projects. He defines scenarios as “narrations of urban possibilities, alternative realities, alternative practices”.⁴⁴⁸ In Bunschoten's opinion, scenarios can be generated by the use of literary elements such as authors, actors, agents and angels. Especially the angels, who are “symbolic heroes and messengers capable of moving through different layers of space”,⁴⁴⁹ indicate an interest in literature. While Bunschoten's urban design ambitions resemble Friedman's search for an open frame in which various alternatives can develop, it is in this use of such mythological characters, and in the creation of a sort of mythological world-view, that Bunschoten follows the late architect John Hejduk, whose work will be discussed later in this chapter. Like Hejduk, Bunschoten makes use of personification – to attribute personality to objects. He sees, for example, the earth as a living body, and cities as an artificially created second skin of the earth. Architecture, then, reveals the relation between humans and earth through inscriptions in the skin of the earth.⁴⁵⁰

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445 Yona Friedman, “L'Architecture Mobile”, 1958, re-published in Hilde Heynen, André Loecks et al (eds.), *Dat is Architectuur. sleutelteksten uit de twintigste eeuw*, 010 Publishers Rotterdam 2001

446 A similar focus on changeability of architectural structures was also at stake in the work of the Dutch John Habraken and the SAR Foundation for Architect's Research. In his book *Supports*, Habraken holds a plea for a limitation of the work of the architect- rather than designing dwellings to the very detail, architects should limit themselves to the structural and spatial framework, and allow for users to choose their own in-fill. Within such a framework, various forms of use, which change over time, can take place. *Supports: an Alternate to Mass Housing*. Gateshead, UK (The Urban International Press) 2000 (reprint of the 1972 edition); original edition: *De dragers en de mensen. Het einde van de massawoningbouw*. Amsterdam (Scheltema en Holkema), 1962.

447 Yona Friedman, 1970

448 CHORA/ Raoul Bunschoten, Takuro Hoshino, Hélène Binet, *Urban Flotsam*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam, 2001, p.250

449 Ibidem, p. 252 Indeed, Bunschoten's argument in *Urban Flotsam* comes with numerous literary references, such as Perec, Calvino and Borges.

450 FORUM 36/1 november 1992, special issue Raoul Bunschoten, *Architectura & Amicitia*, Amsterdam 1992, p.40

The “prescriptive” architectural practices discussed above use various literary techniques, such as the creation of characters, the use of narrative and scenario techniques as well as literary writing styles in which illusion, myth and exaggeration are employed. The imagined situations they create while reacting to existing reality can form radical critiques, offer speculations on new technological developments, or search for open scenarios in which new stories can evolve. However, the above discussed practices largely remained conceptual, and hardly ever resulted in physical solutions to the spatial questions of their time. The merit of these practices is that they actively seek the balance between the real and the imagined, that they are selective in their world-view and in that sense also critical. It is through these themes that we can discover new, more operational ways to include architectural prescriptions in contemporary architectural and urban practice.

4.2.2 Real and imagined: urban scenarios

166 For my argument, I wish to elaborate on reality and imagination in spatial design. I will first show how the combined quality of the real and the imagined, which we encounter in literary prescriptions, comes to the fore in the spatial thought of, among others, geographer Edward Soja. Then I will discuss how imagination can address the role of time in the construction of spatial prescriptions: designers by definition have to deal with the uncertainty about what will happen in a future situation. Precisely these themes will lead to a possibility of *prescription* in design: scenario planning.

In his book *Thirdspace*, geographer Edward Soja discusses how the real and imagined both take part in the production and experience of urban space. His work is a contemporary, close reading of Lefebvre’s theories on space. Following Lefebvre, Soja argues that space is never neutral:

“Space is simultaneously objective and subjective, material and metaphorical, a medium and outcome of social life; actively both an immediate milieu and an originating presupposition, empirical and theorizable, instrumental, strategic, essential.”⁴⁵¹ The imagination of space is by no means only the task of architects and urban planners, who conceive of not-yet-existing spaces by profession. Spaces are also imagined by their users, the imagination of space is embedded in stories and memories. Indeed, this idea of space as not neutral, as both real and imagined, closely relates to Lefebvre’s concept of lived space.⁴⁵² Soja argues that Lefeb-

451 Edward Soja, *Thirdspace, journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1999 [1996], p. 45

452 Closely following Lefebvres Livedspace, Soja proposes another term, Thirdspace, which he defines as: “a knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices”. Edward Soja, *Thirdspace, journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1999 (1996), p. 31

vre was, with Michel Foucault,⁴⁵³ one of the first theorists who opened up spatial discourse, proposing more complex and inclusive ways of thinking about space. Precisely this opening towards spatial thought, claiming that space is simultaneously real and imagined, implies that spatial thought should by no means be limited to a single discipline. Rather, opening up spatial thought means to take on a multidisciplinary approach. Soja notes that Lefebvre, in his thinking and writing, has been influenced by the literary movements of surrealism and magic realism, noticeable for example in Lefebvre’s “fascinations with concrete abstractions, paradoxically materialist idealisation . . . simultaneous worlds of the real-and-imagined”.⁴⁵⁴ Soja points, for example, at Lefebvres literary way of composing his book *The Production of Space*: as a voyage or musical composition, rather than as a scientific argument, meandering and branching off rather than employing a linear line of thought. In Lefebvre’s concept of lived space, Soja sees a clear parallel with Juan Luis Borges’ literary space called the *Aleph*. This literary space is an inclusive space, in which impressions, experiences, memories and real spatial experiences come together in a simultaneous experience:

*Then I saw the Aleph. . . . the limitless Aleph, which my floundering mind can scarcely encompass. . . . In that single gigantic instant I saw millions of acts both delightful and awful; not one of them amazed me more than the fact that all of them occupied the same point in space, without overlapping or transparency. What my eyes beheld was simultaneous . . . and I felt dizzy and wept, for my eyes had seen that secret and conjectured object whose name is common to all men but which no man has looked upon – the unimaginable universe.*⁴⁵⁵

167 If the ultimate account of lived space is like the Aleph, a space in which all kinds of spatial experiences, both real and imagined come together, seen from all angles and in different temporalities, then introducing lived space in spatial thought requires taking into consideration simultaneity, including both the real and the imagined. If we extend Soja’s argument to not only spatial thought, but also to its design, a step can be made towards a design approach that allows imagination to generate multiple perspectives on space. Architecture theorist K. Michael Hays argues that architectural imagination has everything to do with place-making. The architect’s reaction to a given situation, then, exists in that “architecture’s imagination unfolds all of its conditions into formal quanta, intensities, or architectemes and produces an analogue of the originary, purposeful, place-making condition of architecture.”⁴⁵⁶ Analogy, this literary concept that presents an “other” view, an interpretation of a given situation, is indeed a possible instrument in imagining new accounts of places. Analogies can be seen as “mental structures which facilitate an understanding of the world as much as they resemble

453 Soja aims at Foucaults concept of “heterotopia”, literally Other Places, described as “the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs”, Foucault, quoted in Soja, *Thirdspace*, op cit note 73, p. 15

454 Edward Soja, *Thirdspace, journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1999 (1996), p.4

455 Jorge Luis Borges, *The Aleph and Other Stories: 1933-1969*, Bantam Books, New York 1971, as quoted and discussed in Soja, *Thirdspace*, op. cit. note 73, pp. 54-59

456 K. Michael Hays, *Architecture’s Desire. reading the late avant-garde*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass / London 2010, p.27

it”.⁴⁵⁷ Architect Aldo Rossi is known for his use of analogy as an architectural tool. For Rossi, analogical thought can be applied on different scales, from the urban to the object. This kind of thought, according to Rossi, merges the real and the imagined, as it “is sensed yet unreal, imagined yet silent . . . archaic, unexpressed, and practically inexpressible by words”.⁴⁵⁸ In his explanation accompanying the publication of his work *The Analogous City*, Rossi reflects on the relation between reality and imagination, stating that it is the combination of both that should be taken into account in urban projects:

“There is no invention, complexity or even irrationality that is not seen from the side of reason, or at least, from the side of the dialectics of the concrete. And I believe in the capacity of imagination as a concrete thing . . . description and knowledge should give rise to a further stage: the capacity of the imagination born from the concrete.”⁴⁵⁹ In his text, Rossi argues to incorporate imagination in urban design: “Without the capacity to imagine the future there can be no solution to the city as an essential social fact.”⁴⁶⁰ Therefore, Rossi argues that the task of the designer is indeed to imagine new realities while keeping in mind the concrete, existing reality, to

“. . . offer alternatives . . . that can be discussed, understood and hence either accepted or rejected by the people who live in those cities. Gone are the days of urban *models* and with them the age of urban techniques, self-description and functions passed off as solutions. The city must be dealt with each time, by gathering and developing its contradictions, day by day, directly.”⁴⁶¹

168 Rossi clearly criticizes the rigidity of urban planning practices. Indeed, urban models are often too closed-off and therefore insufficient when it comes to the contradictions and uncertainties that urban future has to offer. One could wonder if the traditional idea of designing a fixed master plan does justice to the role of time and indeterminacy. While Rossi’s above mentioned comments were written in the late 1960s, the current urban condition calls even more for an awareness that architects and urban designers need to acknowledge that the city is constantly changing. Especially in larger design projects for urban or landscape contexts, the question is how to deal with these aspects of change. Indeed, the development of places depends on a large number of factors, the role of which cannot always be completely known in advance: aspects of chance and indeterminacy produce unforeseen changes (of use, of politics, of economic conditions, etcetera). By the very nature of their profession, which aims to provide spatial constructions for a near future, architects are obliged to connect their spatial imagination to a view on how a situation (urban reality, site, context) will develop in time. One should therefore look for a design approach that can take into account chance and indeterminacy.

457 Lévi Strauss, *Pensée sauvage/ The Savage Mind*, 1966, quoted by Hays, in K. Michael Hays, *Architecture’s Desire. reading the late avant-garde*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass / London 2010, p.35

458 Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1982, quoted by Hays, in K. Michael Hays, *Architecture’s Desire. reading the late avant-garde*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass / London 2010, p.38

459 Aldo Rossi, *The Analogous City: panel*, text accompanying the publication of the Analogous City panel, in: Forum International 13, December 1976, pp. 5-6

460 Ibidem, p. 6

461 Ibidem, p.7

According to researcher Yeoryia Manolopoulou, who has investigated the role of chance in artistic practices, chance is fundamental in any spatial experience. She refers to the role of accident in literature, for example in Edgar Allen Poe’s *The Angel of the Odd*,⁴⁶² which indeed features the perception of momentary events. Here, it is the alienation from the expected that generates the joy of reading. Likewise, meaningful experience of space has often to do with alienation from the expected perception, and such experience happens suddenly, unexpectedly, through chance. Manolopoulou distinguishes three kinds of chance, as used in artistic practices. First, *impulsive*, intuitive chance, which is related to the dream, accident and the unconscious as an “intuitive mechanism for creativity”.⁴⁶³ This is the use of chance as encountered in the artistic and literary practices of Dada and surrealism. A second form of using chance is *systematic*, in that it is consciously applied in a systematic way. This can be seen, for example, in the musical compositions of John Cage, who deliberately took into account indeterminacy in his musical compositions. Here, the method of composition is well defined, but a chosen number of factors, such as amplitude, timbre and performance, are left open to chance, thereby generating multiple possibilities within the piece of music.⁴⁶⁴ Third, Manolopoulou mentions *active* chance, which implies that chance is actively used not only in the conception of a work, but also in its further existence. In other words, the concrete realized work also reacts to chance, caused by external forces such as the participation of users. In that sense, the situationist technique of *dérive*, which stimulates people to participate in their environment, was “a positive practice of employing chance, arising collectively and in time as an expansive indeterminate drawing of action on the surface of the city”.⁴⁶⁵

Manolopoulou argues that if chance, in its different forms, has been productive in different artistic disciplines, it could also be productive in different stages of architectural design. Architecture of chance, then, becomes “the architecture of the moment, vulnerable but constructively so, to accident; it gains from failures and imperfections, and accepts chance as an essential part of existence”.⁴⁶⁶ 169

I propose that important clues for an approach to architectural an urban design that enables imaginative thinking about new spatial and temporal realities, taking into account the aspect of uncertainty, can be found in literature. The literary technique of scenario writing offers valuable means to develop multiple perspectives on urban and architectural futures. Scenarios are scripts, prescribing different, possible future realities. As Pedro Gadanho, architect and editor of the collection of architectural short stories *Beyond. Scenarios and Speculations* argues,

462 Edgar Allen Poe, *Angel of the Odd*, Argo, 2007 [1850], discussed by Yeoryia Manolopoulou at a lecture at the Delft School of Design, Delft University of Technology, March 18, 2008. The idea of chance is extensively discussed in her PhD thesis: Yeoryia Manolopoulou *Drawing on Chance: Indeterminacy, Perception and Design*, University College London, 2003

463 Yeoryia Manolopoulou, “The Active Voice of Architecture: an Introduction to the Idea of Chance”, in: FIELD Free journal for Architecture Vol 1 [1], p. 67

464 John Cage, *Silence. Lectures and writings*, Marion Boyars, London, 1987 [1968], p.35

465 Yeoryia Manolopoulou, “The Active Voice of Architecture: an Introduction to the Idea of Chance”, in: FIELD Free journal for Architecture Vol 1 [1], p. 68. See for a further discussion of Situationist practices the next part of this chapter.

466 Ibidem, pp.71-72

“scenarios are greatly engaging because all it takes for them to challenge our minds is imagination itself: imagination on the part of those who invent them and imagination on the part of those who take them in”. The power of the scenario is that “for a brief moment, imaginations [can be] triggered into a parallel, possible and yet impossible reality. That moment is precious. It is the moment when minute details are taken to extremes. And when one learns limits to reality.”⁴⁶⁷ Indeed, precisely the notions discussed in this chapter – the balance between reality and imagination, the role of time, chance and simultaneity – are at stake in the practice of scenario writing. One of the first known applications of scenarios for other than literary or cinematographic purposes took place in the United States at the time of the cold war, as a way to develop military strategies in extremely uncertain periods, such as nuclear threats.⁴⁶⁸ It was further developed in the 1970s as a methodology to help strategic decision-making in business, by the Royal Dutch Shell oil company.⁴⁶⁹ The initiators at Shell believed that predicting the future based on knowledge from the past was outdated. They applied the literary techniques of setting a framework and composing multiple plots to deal with uncertain, but important factors in their business strategies. Their idea was not to predict one ideal future, but instead to generate multiple possible ones, and to identify the driving forces of these alternative realities. In this way, the company could adapt its strategies to unforeseen changes.

Important in scenario planning is thus the identification of possible factors of influence, and the definition, as stated in the Shell methodology, of the critical uncertainties. In recent decades scenario planning, as a methodology to deal with uncertainties of the future, has been gaining ground in various fields of planning. Naturally, scenario planning can also be brought into action as a spatial practice that provides an alternative to traditional urban planning. Indeed, in contemporary practice a shift is taking place towards more open design approaches, such as strategic planning and urban scenario planning, which allow for chance within a given framework. Urban scenario planning implies that, based on the analysis of potentials of the existing situation, multiple alternatives can be developed. In this approach, uncertainty is regarded as a potentially productive factor for the architectural, urban and landscape design. Scenario planning thus gives the designer another role than that of the traditional master planner, who works towards a fixed result. Rather, the designer develops

467 Pedro Gadanho, “Taken to Extremes”, introduction to Pedro Gadanho (ed.), *Beyond, shortstories on the post-contemporary no.1. Scenarios and speculations*, SUN Publishers Amsterdam 2009, p. 10

468 This scenario planning took place the military think tank RAND in the 1950, and was introduced by Herman Kahn. It has been said that Kahn was the model for Stanley Kubrick’s character *Dr. Strangelove*. See also: Christian Salewski, “Dr. Strangelove, I presume. On the intimate relation between between scenarios and critical paranoia”, paper presentation at *Tickle your Catastrophe* conference, NGE (Dutch Aesthetics Society), Department of Theatre Sciences Ghent University, Jan van Eyck Academy Maastricht, and KASK (Faculty of Fine Art) College University Ghent, March 06-07, 2009 Ghent Belgium

469 Key actors in this proces were Pierre Wack and, in a later stage, Peter Schwartz. Schwartz has clearly formulated the steps in the process of scenario planning in: Peter Schwartz, *The Art of The Long View. Planning for the future in an uncertain world*. Broadway Business, New York 1996 [1991]. The history of Shell’s explorations on scenario methodology has been extensively described in the texts of members of the Global Business Network, which was founded by Peter Schwartz in 1987, http://www.gbn.com/about/scenario_planning (accessed 04-08-2010). See also: Joel Garreau “The Global Business Network”, *Wired* 2.11, 1994, p.98

a set of possibilities within a framework. In that sense, the designer becomes a sort of script-writer. In German a *Schriftsteller*, the one who puts scenes into writing. The architect becomes the one who imagines the scenes, and who writes the language with which new spatial scenes can be constructed.⁴⁷⁰ It then becomes the task of the designer to analyse a given situation, set the stage and imagine which stories can be developed departing from the potential of the situation. If scenario planning is indeed “the methodical thinking of the unthinkable”,⁴⁷¹ it becomes clear that literary methods discussed in the first part of this chapter, relating to the construction of critical world-views and to the imaginative interpretations of reality, can be operational in architectural and urban scenarios.

4.2.3 Temporal and spatial world-views: chronotope

If architectural prescription is the act of imagining new situations, it must involve a view on space as well as time. As every activity takes place in space, but also in time, as Yi-Fu Tuan states: “Space and time coexist, intermesh, and define each other in personal experience. Every activity generates a particular spatio-temporal structure, but this structure seldom thrusts to the front of awareness.”⁴⁷² Such spatio-temporal awareness manifests itself, for example, by expressions of travel: the distance from one place to another can be measured in time: half an hour by train or a four-hour flight. However, the aspect of temporality is at stake at more levels of spatial experience:

“Space has temporal meaning in the reflections of a poet, in the mystique of exploration, and in the drama of migration. Space also has temporal meaning at the level of day-to-day personal experiences. Language itself reveals the intimate connectivity among people, space and time.”⁴⁷³ An interesting concept to address the relationship between time and space in world-views of literary writers has been offered by Russian philosopher and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. In his search for another way of categorizing literature than, for example, the categorization in literary genres or themes, he proposed to investigate the way images of time and space are presented in a narrative. Such analysis would reveal the dominant spatio-temporal framework in a novel, the so-called “chronotope”.⁴⁷⁴ This chronotope can be seen as

470 Professor Wim van den Bergh claims that John Hejduk uses a similar approach. Wim van den Bergh, “Stemloze rede, zwiiggende spraak” (Voiceless reason, silent speech), foreword to John Hejduk, *Berlin Night*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 1993, see for further discussion the next part of this chapter.

471 Peter Schwartz, *The Art of The Long View. Planning for the future in an uncertain world*. Broadway Business, New York 1996 [1991], as quoted in: Joel Garreau “The Global Business Network”, *Wired* 2.11, 1994, p.98

472 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place. The perspective of experience*. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1977, pp.130-131

473 Ibidem, p.126

474 Bakhtin introduced this notion in his 1938 essay “Forms of Chronotope and Time in the Novel”, published in English translation in: M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, University of Texas Press, 1981. See also: Bart Keunen, *De Verbeelding van de Grootstad. Stads- en wereldbeelden in het proza van de moderniteit*, VUB Press, Gent University, Brussels 2000 [*The Imagination of the Metropolis. City- and Worldviews in the prose of modernity*], p. 69

an intellectual construction with temporal and spatial dimensions. According to Bakhtin, the chronotope functions as “the primary means for materializing time in space”, and as such, it “emerges as a center for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel”.⁴⁷⁵ The chronotope concept can thus be defined as an intellectual structure, with both a temporal and a spatial dimension, which establishes the world view presented in the novel. It is in this defined time-space frame that important events in the novel, such as encounters and dialogues, take place. In that sense it is an organizing principle for literary work: it selects the significant images corresponding to the right time-space frame. Through its chronotope, a literary world could present, for instance, a historical time-space frame, a future world, or a world in which the relation between time and space is more complicated. For example, Scheerbart’s descriptions of space, as well as Orwell’s and Houellebecq’s, depict a world that is imagined as a future one. In Orwell’s literary future, the reader still experiences memories of the past, evoked by the spatial descriptions of the ruins of the “old” London, but in the new world of Oceania, no reference to the past is possible:

*Do you realize that the past, starting from yesterday, has been actually abolished? . . . Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street and building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And that process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right.*⁴⁷⁶

Quite a different manner of dealing with time and space can be found, for example, in Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*.⁴⁷⁷ A number of spaces, such as a family house, a theatre, a cathedral or a garden, reappear throughout the extensive novel several times. However, the descriptions are never quite the same: they are transformed by the memories, dreams and imaginations of the protagonist Marcel, who develops throughout the novel from a young boy, through adolescence, to a grown man. The enormous amount of detailed descriptions of such spatial images and memories are said to reflect Proust’s quest “to secure some sense of temporal and spatial certainty, of precisely where and when he is . . . It is this sense of instability and flux that endows Proust’s novel with its own characteristic chronotope”.⁴⁷⁸ Indeed, the whole work can be seen through this framework of the relation between spatial settings and the changing perceptions and memories they produce for the protagonist.

Belgian literary theorist Bart Keunen uses the concept of chronotope in his study of literary representations of the early modern metropolis. He distinguishes a number of different chronotopes in literature describing cities in the age of modernity. These include the idyllic chronotope, in which the “idyllic unity of the place”, in many cases presenting a rural place as opposed to the overabundance of the city, serves as a “locus for entire life”;⁴⁷⁹ the documentary

chronotope, which combines a historical perspective with realistic spatial descriptions; the impressionistic chronotope, in which the subjective aesthetic experience of the narrator plays a decisive role; and the hyperrealistic chronotope, connected to the writings of the avant-garde. Each of these chronotopes comes with a specific world-view, defined by the relation between spatial representation and temporal processes.⁴⁸⁰ The documentary chronotope, for example, can be found in Emile Zola’s descriptions of the urban spaces of modernity, such as department stores and market halls, which are connected to socioeconomic phenomena that are specific for a certain (historical) time.⁴⁸¹ Keunen defines Walter Benjamin’s aesthetic view of the modern city as an “impressionistic” chronotope, characterized by a world-view that is lyrical and subjective.⁴⁸² Indeed, if we read Benjamin’s descriptions of cities such as Paris, Berlin, Naples or Moscow,⁴⁸³ we find that he does not treat the city as an abstraction, but rather describes fragments and details of the momentary experience of specific places. In the Berlin Chronicle (*Berliner Kindheit*), for example, the city is a secretive place, something to be discovered by observation of details of stairs, streets, alleyways, courtyards; by imagination, by memories. Berlin is described in a wandering way, the narrator encounters fragments of the city in a sequence of moments. Also when Benjamin introduces the character of the *flâneur*, in his reflections on the Parisian Arcades, this impressionistic chronotope is noticeable. The impressionistic chronotope, as encountered in Benjamin’s writing, thus combines a fragmented account of space with a momentary account of time. As such, Benjamin’s spatial descriptions are connected to an internal *moment* of experience: the moment of personal impression generated by spatial circumstances. As Keunen explains: “Perceiver and perceived come together in the internal time of the subjective perception or the subjective memory.”⁴⁸⁴ This momentary spatial experience strongly relates to the “poetic moment” of Bachelard: the moment of poetic experience, when the image is perceived, before it is reflected upon.⁴⁸⁵

Surrealism, in which discontinuity and simultaneity are at stake, has some of the most extreme chronotopes in literature, defined by Keunen as *hyperrealistic*. In Keunen’s words, the image of the hyperrealistic chronotope relies on “the simultaneous representation of discontinuous mimetic images . . . Because the development of time is pressed into one simultaneous moment, a space come into being which seems fragmented and disorganized.” This hyperrealistic perception, states Keunen, is only seemingly chaotic, “because the spatial borders

480 Keunen, 2000. pp. 75-77. Even if in most literary works, there is usually one dominant chronotope, Keunen also speaks of polychronotopy: the co-existence of several different chronotopes in one work of literature. Alfred Doblins’ *Berlin Alexanderplatz* from 1929 is used by Keunen as an example.

481 Keunen, 2000. pp. 90-91, referring to writings of Emile Zola, such as *Le Ventre de Paris*, from 1873

482 Bart Keunen, 2000, p. 83

483 In for example: Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aforisms, Autobiographical Writings*, Schocken Books, New York 1986; Walter Benjamin, *Paris, Capitale du XIXe Siecle*, Editions Allia, Paris, 2003 [*Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX Jahrhunderts*, 1938, Suhrkamp 1972]; Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften I-IV*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1980-89 [1974]

484 Keunen, 2000, pp. 82-85, translation from Dutch KMH

485 See for a more detailed discussion of Bachelard’s poetic moment the chapter Description in this work. And indeed, this notion also relates to the aspect of temporality that has been touched upon in the chapter Transcription by Ricoeurs argument that narrative can bring different temporalities (past, present, future) together.

475 Bakhtin, 1981, p.250

476 George Orwell, *Nineteen eighty-four*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1965 (1949), pp. 126-127

477 Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Gallimard, Paris 1919, English translation by C.K.Scott Moncrieff, Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, Wordsworth Editions, 2006 see also the chapter Description of this work.

478 Jeremy Lane, “Pierre Bourdieu and the Chronotopes of Post-Theory” in Martin McGuillan, Greame MacDonald a.o. (eds) *Post-Theory: New directions in criticism*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1999, p.98

479 Keunen, 2000. p. 80, quoting from Bakhtin 1981 [1938], p.225

between fragments seem to dissolve, and make place for a strongly condensed series of temporal moments".⁴⁸⁶ The technique of montage is often used as the connecting principle in this chronotope: fragments are no longer presented in a linear narrative, but are organized in a more associative way. Indeed, if we look back to Aragon's *Paris Peasant*, we can see that what seems at first a focused description of a specific place (the passage) and time (the moment of wandering around), becomes a tumbling over each other of dreamlike events, taking place simultaneously and exceeding beyond the space of the passage itself, entering into the unlimited space of the imagination. While in *Paris Peasant* the passage is still a concrete space to which the fragments are related, other surrealist writings, such as Breton's *Nadja* or the writings of Paul Eluard, are even more fragmented and dreamlike, lacking a spatial focus. Instead of a spatial or temporal continuity, the fragments are bound together by montage, by the rhythm and style of the text, or by means of metaphor. The hyperrealist chronotope thus refers to extraordinary spatial scenes, taking place in a dynamic conception of time, characterized by simultaneity.

The chronotope has a twofold function: on the one hand it is an artistic instrument that serves as a selective filter for the information presented in the novel, while on the other a chronotope in a novel is often used by the writer as a metaphor for society.⁴⁸⁷ Indeed, as Bakhtin states, the literary writer reflects on the existing world, by creating his own view on the world: "... out of the actual chronotopes of our world ... emerge the reflected and *created* chronotopes represented in the text."⁴⁸⁸ This is indeed the case for the various literary works discussed in the first part of this chapter. They each employ a specific framework with spatial and temporal dimensions, and through this framework they react to reality – and present a new, imagined one. A similar strategy is at hand in the production of architectural works. In architecture, such a framework of time and space, which offers a selection filter for reacting to reality, is likely to be at the basis of architects imaginary prescriptions; their designs for future situations. Indeed, in architecture as well, one can think of a world-view defined by the author, an imaginary world, based on an interpretation of existing conditions, characterized by specific temporal and spatial dimensions. Could, in an architectural chronotope, time become "artistically visible", while "space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history",⁴⁸⁹ as Bakhtin argued about the literary chronotope? Is time a linear feature for an architect, can a future be foreseen, as in the chronotope of Scheerbart and futurist writers? Does architecture respond to an ideal, artistic view of time and space, such as in an idyllic chronotope? Do architectural typologies fit in a historically embedded perspective, as in the documentary chronotope, or is architecture flexible, and does a design take into account a

486 Keunen, 2000, p. 98, translation KMH

487 This twofold function of the chronotope is further discussed in Janice Best, in: Janice Best "The chronotope and the generation of meaning in novels and paintings". *Criticism*. Spring 1994, Wayne State University Press. (Digital version at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2220/is_n2_v36/ai_15435238/, accessed 08 June, 2010).

488 M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 253

489 Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250, quoted in Keunen, pp. 68-69, also quoted by Hays, in: K. Michael Hays (ed.) *Hejduks Chronotope*, Princeton Press, New York 1996, p.14

dynamic interplay of spatial and temporal dimensions, could it provide a 'condensed series of moments', as in the hyperrealistic chronotope of literary movements such as surrealism? Remarkably, the literary concept of chronotope has not very often been connected to architecture.⁴⁹⁰ According to K. Michael Hays, who placed the work of John Hejduk in this perspective, the chronotope "provides a useful tool for synthesizing a number of ... features into effective patterns if not a generalizable proposition".⁴⁹¹ I would argue that in architecture, the concept of chronotope is particularly interesting if we want to discuss the relation between spatial imagination and time in the world-view of the architect.

Indeed, one could state that architects, by the very nature of their profession, which aims to provide spatial constructions for a near future, are obliged to construct a framework in which their spatial imagination is connected to a view on how a situation (urban reality, site, context) develops in time. Archigrams's chronotope, for example, shows resemblance to that of Scheerbart: an idealized and exaggerated view on a new future, in which spatial experience is dominated by new technological possibilities. One position could entail that prescriptions be based on continuity – Aldo Rossi, for example, departs from an idea of the *longue durée* of architecture.⁴⁹² The new architectural situations he constructs are embedded in the historical continuity of urban typology. Rossi's drawn manifest *The Analogous City*⁴⁹³ is very illustrative of how historical reality and imagination of future possibilities come together in a single work. With his Analogous City panel, Rossi refers to Canaletto's eighteenth-century painting of Venice,⁴⁹⁴ which is a superimposition of different fragments, both imagined and concrete, quoted from elsewhere or actually existing on the site. Rossi does a similar thing: he puts together fragments that together offer an image of an alternative, but imaginable reality. The work shows a collage of overlapping fragments, some of which present parts of the plan of ancient Rome, or perspectives of existing spatial constructions, others fragments derive from Rossi's designs for urban sites, a cemetery, even product design such as coffee pots. Together, these fragments of real and imagined parts of the city, in which different times, spaces and scales overlap, form a remarkably convincing construction of an urban situation, in which concrete past and imagined future coexist. In Rossi's chronotope, thus, memory plays an important role in imagining future spaces. The approach of architect John Hejduk, on the other hand, has been characterized by K. Michael Hays as an "impressionistic chronotope".⁴⁹⁵

Indeed, Hejduk's account of the city, as expressed in his so called *Masques*,⁴⁹⁶ typified by

490 An exception is the collection of essays on the work of John Hejduk, a result of a conference in Canada in 1996. K. Michael Hays (ed.) *Hejduk's Chronotope*, Princeton Press, New York 1996. I will come back to Hejduk's chronotope further in this chapter.

491 Ibidem, p.10

492 Rossi explains his position in regard to the "permanence" of urban artefacts most explicitly in: Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1982, original publication Aldo Rossi, *L'architettura della città*, Marsilio, Padova 1966

493 Aldo Rossi, *La Città Analoga*, collage, exhibited in the Venice Biennale 1976.

494 Canaletto, *Fantastic View with Rialto Bridge and the Basilica of Vicenza*

495 K. Michael Hays (ed.) *Hejduks Chronotope*, Princeton Press, New York 1996, p.14

496 Hejduk's Masques series consists of a number of publications, containing notes, poems and architectural sketches about Riga, Vladiwostok, Berlin and other cities. NNNNN

Hays as “narrative systems of time and space that produce a distinctive phenomenal ‘feel’ of places”,⁴⁹⁷ bears resemblance to Benjamin’s subjective account of the city, with an intense merging of the real and the imagined centred on one moment – the moment of experience. For Hejduk, this moment is constructed through impressions of past events, existing situations and possible new relations between the physical objects of the city (its buildings, streets and so forth), and its subjects: its inhabitants or passers-by. The subjects sometimes take on imaginative identities like angels, which seem to be at home more in a literary dream-world than in the practical realm of urban and architectural design. Hejduk’s drawings, poems and designs depict a dream world, inhabited by literary figures such as angels and heroes. In his chronotope, a distance is thus taken from the rational, predictable world that most designers tend to work in. In Hejduk’s chronotope “. . . the city itself becomes a smooth space of directional traces (both registering past events and projecting possible future ones) rather than a measurable, regulating grid”.⁴⁹⁸

In that sense, Hejduk’s works resemble theatre scenes. According to Dutch architect and professor Wim van den Bergh:

“Hejduk’s masques, his theatre pieces about the architecture of the city . . . are structured like free matrices for scenarios, with simultaneous sequences of objects and subjects. In this way, they generate the space of a ‘virtual city’ with its specific ‘hardware’ and ‘software’.”⁴⁹⁹ This tension between real cities and their imagined subject-object relationships reveals a truly literary approach. Van den Bergh argues that Hejduk is an architect who *writes* architecture, by isolating architecture from its daily practice, by revealing its essences, by playing with its subjects and objects.⁵⁰⁰ Writing, in this case, is not understood as a linguistic practice, but as a temporal-spatial one. Van den Bergh suggests that Hejduk develops a new spatio-temporal language through a number of operations. First, he isolates the scene from its social references, considering it a world in itself; then, he articulates the scene through the articulation of forms and signs; third, a kind of ordering takes place; and finally, a dramatization. The architect here becomes a scenographer, “someone who becomes totally absorbed in the framework he constructs and rearranges *ad infinitum*”.⁵⁰¹ And indeed, this framework is temporal-spatial: a chronotope. Hejduk’s architectural works are also based on a similar framework – his constructions do not in the first place address practical problems or prescribe future use, rather, they offer dreamlike impressions, stage-sets for alternative realities. Hejduk’s chronotope, then, implies an architecture of the moment, in which a set of possible spatial configurations is at play. As can be seen from the examples of Aldo Rossi and John Hejduk, the chronotope can indeed be used as a conceptual filter through which time and space are understood in the production of architectural projects. Embedded in the chronotope, is also the delicate balance between reality and imagination; the reality of past and present space, the imagination of future spatial situations.

497 K. Michael Hays, *Architecture’s Desire. reading the late avant-garde*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass / London 2010, p.111

498 K. Michael Hays, *Hejduk’s Chronotope*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 1996, pp. 11-14

499 Wim van den Bergh, “Stemloze rede, zwijgende spraak” (Voiceless reason, silent speech), foreword to John Hejduk, *Berlin Night*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 1993, p. 8, translation from Dutch KMH

500 *ibidem*, p.4

501 *Ibidem*, p.6

4.3 ARCHITECTURAL PRESCRIPTION

4.3.1 Architectural prescription: Rem Koolhaas

Prescription, as I understand this term, is thus more than setting the scene for future development. Rather, it can be understood as a “scriptive” approach in which the relationship between reality and imagination is consciously explored to highlight select aspects of reality. In surrealist and magic realist writing, this entailed a search for the “marvellous”, while in other literary prescriptions a critique on reality is expressed. In any case, mechanisms of selection are important in constructing particular views on real and imagined situations. For the act of constructing situations, whether in text or in architecture, a view on space as well as time is necessary. Rather than looking for a fixed idea of a future situation, a prescriptive approach to architecture and the city departs from an intellectual framework through which a selective view on the world is constructed, which guides the making of possible alternative realities.

In this part of the chapter, I will show how the work of Rem Koolhaas can be seen in this light. First, because both his writings and his architectural projects are based on a “scriptive” view on the world and on artistic production. As is well known, Koolhaas was trained as a scriptwriter in Amsterdam before starting his architectural education, and worked as a journalist, editor and scriptwriter in the late 1960s.⁵⁰² Asked about the parallels between scriptwriting and architecture, Koolhaas states:

“In a script, you have to link various episodes together, you have to generate suspense and you have to assemble things – through editing, for example. It’s exactly the same in architecture. Architects also put together spatial episodes to make sequences.”⁵⁰³ As I will argue in the forthcoming paragraphs, both his texts concerning the urban condition – from *Delirious New York* to *Generic City* or *Junkspace* – and his designs can be understood as the product of a combination of scriptwriting and architecture. A second reason to discuss the approach of Koolhaas is that in his wide range of projects a great number of prescriptive techniques can be identified, derived from surrealist practices, avant-garde experiments and literary speculations. Metaphors, montage techniques, the “paranoid critical” method and productive uncertainty of chance can all be encountered in writings and designs by Koolhaas/OMA. Finally, Koolhaas’s work is embedded in an intellectual framework that involves a specific view on space and time, in other words, a chronotope. This chronotope does not only offer Koolhaas a frame-

502 Koolhaas was involved with the Dutch magazine *Haagsche Post* as writer and editor. As scriptwriter, most notably are the works made with his fellow students in *Filmgroep 123*, some members of which have later become successful cinematographers or directors. See also Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas / OMA: The Construction of Merveilles*, EPFL Press/ Routledge, Lausanne, 2008, p. 3

503 “Evil Can also Be Beautiful”, interview with Rem Koolhaas, *Der Spiegel*, March 27 2006, The interview was conducted by editors Matthias Matussek and Joachim Kronsbein. (Online version at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,408748-2,00.html>, visited Oct 27, 2009).

work for literary production, but also for architectural and urban design. I will first focus on *Delirious New York* as an early prescriptive project of Koolhaas's, which constructs a basis for later projects, both written and designed. I will identify the use of literary instruments in *Delirious New York* and in OMA's later work to show *how* the prescriptive approach is used not only as a tool of analysis, but also of architectural production. Or rather, that analysis in itself can be a form of architectural production.

Koolhaas's scriptive approach informed his explorations of New York in the 1970s, where he adopted the not only the role of the reader/observer of the urban condition, but also of its scriptwriter. In *Delirious New York*, published in 1978 – perhaps his most extensive urban script, and the one that gave him wide international acclaim – Koolhaas calls himself Manhattan's ghostwriter.⁵⁰⁴ According to Roberto Gargiani, in his extensive study on the work of Koolhaas and OMA, *Delirious New York* is in itself a “conceptual-metaphorical project”, a script “where the skyscrapers are the actors and Manhattan is the stage”.⁵⁰⁵ I dare say that Manhattan itself is even the main character, a personality rather than a stage, while Koolhaas himself is the director, bringing the scenes, located in the past, present or imaginative future of the movie star⁵⁰⁶ Manhattan in an overarching urban script. By doing so, he attempted not only to describe the city, but also to prescribe it, as if to reveal a secret scenario hidden below Manhattan's skyscrapers: the doctrine of “Manhattanism”, a doctrine that not only tells the history of Manhattan, but that could also guide future developments “as a conscious doctrine whose pertinence is no longer limited to the island of its invention”.⁵⁰⁷ The book presents a number of fictive projects for Manhattan, design studies made by Koolhaas and his early OMA co-founders Elia Zenghelis and Madelon Vriesendorp. If *Delirious New York* is a “retroactive manifesto for Manhattan”, then the projects presented in the “fictional conclusion” of the book are the results of a retroactive imagining of what Manhattan could have become if only its doctrine were practiced to the very limits.

The mixture of real and fictive elements in *Delirious New York* leads back to the literary concept of the chronotope, defined earlier in this chapter as the spatio-temporal world-view of the author. Indeed, *Delirious New York* can be seen as a chronotope; the work places the object of investigation in a specifically chosen time-space frame, and offers a selective account of Manhattan, in which historical examples (Coney Island, Rockefeller Centre) are presented alongside fictional projects. The many fragments of Manhattan, both real and imagined, both historical and contemporary or futuristic, seem to come together in an all encompassing present of Manhattanism: their chronological order is less relevant than the doctrine that holds them

504 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York. A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, The Monacelli Press, New York 1994 [1978] p. 11

505 Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas / OMA: The Construction of Merveilles*, EPFL Press/ Routledge, Lausanne, 2008, p.62

506 “Movie stars who have led adventure-packed lives are often too egocentric to discover patterns, to articulate or express intentions, too restless to record or remember events. Ghostwriters do it for them. In the same way, *I was Manhattan's ghostwriter*.” Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York. A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, The Monacelli Press, New York 1994 [1978] p. 11

507 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York. A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, The Monacelli Press, New York 1994 [1978] p. p. 293

together. It is the theory of Manhattanism that reaches across time, to the past as well as to a possible future, or a possible present: the Manhattan that could have been if only its doctrine had been successfully executed. Thus, the chronotope of *Delirious New York* is by no means limited to a mere reading of history: on the contrary, it selects and prescribes scenarios for an overwhelming urban condition in which there is no such thing as linear time.

In *Delirious New York*, metaphors play an important role. The first large metaphor is provided by Coney Island, a world of fantasy, created in the late nineteenth century on an island south of Brooklyn, to entertain the masses. The built fantasies of Coney Island, discussed in the first chapter of *Delirious New York* as the fascinating outcome of the “technology of the fantastic” stand for the spirit that has also created the metropolitan condition of Manhattan. An other recurring metaphor is that of the archipelago. While this notion was in fact used earlier in Koolhaas's collaboration with Oswald Matthias Ungers in relation to city patterns, in Manhattan, the archipelago is one of blocks, defined by the grid. Each block functions, according to Koolhaas, like a separate island, independent of its neighbours.⁵⁰⁸ Other metaphors present in *Delirious New York* are the “buildings like mountains”, and the skyscraper as a “city within a city”. Koolhaas shows how, when dealing with the ungraspable size and character of Manhattan, the metaphor became a planning tool: planners and theoreticians dealing with Manhattan in the early twentieth century, such as Harvey Wiley Corbett, talked about their visions for Manhattan in terms of metaphors – Manhattan as a “very modernized Venice” – rather than in traditional planning schemes. Koolhaas argues that the metaphor could serve as a new way of urban planning: “a vocabulary of poetic formulas that replaces objective planning in favor of a new discipline of *metaphoric planning* to deal with a metropolitan situation fundamentally beyond the quantifiable.”⁵⁰⁹

While Koolhaas frequently refers to the relation between grid and blocks as to a “City of archipelago's”,⁵¹⁰ to indicate the independence of each island as an “ideological laboratory”⁵¹¹ within the rigid order of the grid, the text itself is composed precisely as such an archipelago, in which various episodes take place simultaneously. The text of *Delirious New York* is made up of short fragments touching upon theory, historical cases and fictional projects. These elements are not hierarchically ordered; they are placed on equal footing, they alternate with one another, engage in dialogue. It is a form used earlier by Walter Benjamin. Benjamin's *One-Way Street*, for example, is an assemblage of associations, experiences and theories, objective and subjective, descriptive and interpretative, the author at once being writer and director.⁵¹² As

508 “The population of Manhattan - journeying from block to block - would finally, and literally, inhabit a metropolitan archipelago of 2,028 islands of its own making”. Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, p. 125

509 Ibidem, p. 125

510 Ibidem, p. 97, 123. The term archipelago derived from earlier discussions with the German architect Matthias Ungers, with whom Koolhaas closely collaborated. The use of the notion archipelago in the work of Ungers and Koolhaas has been discussed in the dissertation of Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The possibility of an Absolute Architecture (Writing Architecture)* MIT Press, Cambridge 2011 See also Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas / OMA: The Construction of Merveilles*, EPFL Press/ Routledge, Lausanne, 2008, pp. 45-46

511 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, p. 294

512 Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, original in German: *Einbahnstraße*, Ernst Rowolt Verlag, Berlin 1928, read in Dutch translation: *Eenrichtingsstraat*, Historische Uitgeverij, Groningen 1994

stated earlier, Benjamin's writings of the modern cities of the early twentieth century, such as Paris, Berlin, Naples and Moscow, are fragments of urban experiences. In this way, he "seeks to produce texts which not only give an account of the city, but have metropolitan experiences fundamentally embedded within them".⁵¹³ In other words, the modern urban experience, which is more fragmented, immediate and confusing than before, is reflected in the style of Benjamin's writing. A similar process takes place in Koolhaas's *Delirious New York*. However, while Benjamin concentrates on the subjective experience of the urban phenomenon, Koolhaas takes more distance from his subject: rather than revealing his personal encounters with the typical atmospheres of the city he explores, he presents Manhattan as an abstraction, a theory in itself, for which he collects proof by focusing on (architectural) fragments. While Benjamin's chronotope concentrates on the moments of experience, Koolhaas combines historical references and future images (in the form of his own "fictional" projects) in a montage that suggests simultaneity. This montage is extremely structured, however, and coincides with its content: the fragments can be seen as urban blocks that together constitute the pattern of the city: the grid.

In this aspect of simultaneity, in the use of montage, and in the focus on the fantastic, the chronotope of *Delirious New York* shows a striking resemblance to what Keunen defined as the "hyperrealistic" chronotope, present in many surrealistic literary works. For *Delirious New York*, Koolhaas adapted the *paranoid critical method* of surrealism. This artistic method was coined by Salvador Dalí in 1929 as "the spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the critical and systematic objectification of delirious associations and interpretations".⁵¹⁴ Whereas

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Dalí used this method to meticulously investigate the subconscious, Koolhaas instead made it into a system of interpretation of reality. Koolhaas explained paranoia as "a delirium of interpretation. Each fact, event, force, observation is caught in one system of speculation and 'understood' by the afflicted individual in such a way that it absolutely confirms and reinforces his thesis – that is, the initial delusion that is his point of departure."⁵¹⁵ Indeed, in *Delirious New York*, all the collected fragments point in the same interpretative direction: that of "Manhattanism" as a doctrine, as an alternative form of modernism: one based on congestion, ambiguity and contradiction, rather than on the mere functionality that characterized European modernism. The power of the paranoid critical method, according to Koolhaas, is that it offers "a rational method which does not pretend to be objective, through which analysis becomes identical to creation".⁵¹⁶ At this point, the "paranoid critical" becomes interesting as a design method. To some extent, as Koolhaas himself mentions in *Delirious New York*, every act of design can be characterized as "paranoid critical" as its drawings and calcula-

513 Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectic of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, MIT press, Cambridge, MA, 1997 [1989], p. 183. Benjamin's style of reading and writing the city has also been discussed in the bright essay of Pinar Balat, in the students magazine of my msc2 City & Literature course: *Written City. Nine Visions*. TU Delft 2010, and presented at *Once Upon a Place. International conference on Architecture and Fiction*, Lisbon, 11-15 October 2010

514 Salvador Dalí, *Conversations with Dalí*, Dutton, New York 1969, p.115, quoted in Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York. A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, The Monacelli Press, New York 1994 [1978], p. 237

515 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, p.238

516 Rem Koolhaas, "Surrealism", in: Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S.M.L.XL*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam/The Monacelli Press, New York, 1995, p. 1190(margin dictionary). Also quoted in Gargiani 2008, p.13

tions are made to prove a still un-built, thus totally imaginary construction. The fictional projects presented in *Delirious New York*, such as the *New Welfare Island* and the *Floating Swimming Pool*, can be understood in precisely this way: as conceived through a method of speculation. These projects are scenarios of what could have emerged if Manhattanism had been taken to the extreme, as if it were a doctrine, a system of rules to which all designs for New York should respond. The collection of projects "create a city where permanent monoliths celebrate metropolitan instability", in which the bases of the skyscrapers are "ideological laboratories", placed on the grid to form an "archipelago of Cities within Cities".⁵¹⁷ The *Welfare Palace Hotel*, part of the project for *New Welfare Island* (1975-1976) is presented as such a "City within a City": it is a diverse collection of towers clad in a diversity of materials and housing a large amount of programmatic functions. Its floors offer different atmospheres, all with a metaphorical theme, such as the shipwreck, the uninhabited island and a waterfall. The Floating Pool is literally presented as a story, involving the other "fictional" projects such as the *New Welfare Island* and the *Sphinx* as characters.⁵¹⁸

In *Delirious New York*, Koolhaas thus "wrote" Manhattan on multiple levels, while limiting himself to only that which would offer proof for his hypothesis on Manhattanism by means of a number of scriptive tools: the use of characters; interpretations of surrealist methods like the paranoid critical; the use of metaphors; techniques of montage of fragments; and the use of a chronotope – an intellectual framework with spatial and temporal dimensions – as a selective mechanism. Later textual projects by Koolhaas on contemporary urban phenomena, such as *Generic City* (1995) and *Junkspace* (2000) can be seen precisely in this light. They also construct urban scenarios by a selective description of real and imaginary situations.

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While *Delirious New York* starts off from an historical perspective, looking back to the birth of "the culture of congestion", in order to state its relevance for the contemporary, *Generic City* and *Junkspace* plunge into contemporary urban phenomena, enlarging them to such an extent that their present state is all that matters. *The Generic City*,⁵¹⁹ published in 1995, is both an imagined *prescription* of a future urban condition and an experienced reality of the author. As Roberto Gargiani correctly remarks in his extensive study on the works of Koolhaas,⁵²⁰ by the time of writing of *The Generic City*, in 1994, Koolhaas was already a frequent traveller, seeing much of the world from airplanes, frequenting airports and hotels that were indeed neutral, all alike. This urban condition, experienced in expanding cities all over the world, particularly in the fast-growing metropolises of Asia, offered a scenario in which the historical centre, giving identity to the traditional cities, no longer plays a role; in which the public realm is no longer a space for social interaction but a vast and neutral plain of endless mobility. Indeed, at the end of *The Generic City*, Koolhaas portrays the demise of the city as a film played in reverse, with the vitality gradually disappearing from an urban scene: a marketplace, not by accident a much-used image for the public domain. The image he depicts is one of loss: the end of

517 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York, Appendix: A Fictional Conclusion*, Project "The City of the Captive Globe", pp. 294-296

518 Ibidem, *Appendix: A Fictional Conclusion*, Project "The Story of the Pool (1977)", pp.307-311

519 Rem Koolhaas, "The Generic City. guide", in *S.M.L.XL*, The Monacelli Press, New York 1995, pp. 1252-3

520 Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas / OMA: The Construction of Merveilles*, EPFL Press/ Routledge, Lausanne, 2008, p.230

the city, the end of such a concept as the public realm:

*Market scene: from left and right extra's cloaked in colorful rags, furs, silken robes walk into the frame yelling, gesticulating, rolling their eyes, starting fights, laughing, scratching their beard, hairpieces dripping with glue, thronging toward the center of the image waving sticks, fists, overturning stalls, trampling animals . . . Now switch off the sound . . . and reverse the film. The now mute but still visibly agitated men and women stumble backward . . . The center empties; the last shadows evacuate the rectangle of the picture frame, probably complaining, but fortunately we don't hear them. Silence is now reinforced by emptiness: the image shows empty stalls, some debris that was trampled underfoot. Relief . . . it's over. That is the story of the city. The city is no longer. We can leave the theater now . . .*⁵²¹

The “evacuation of the public realm”⁵²² signifies for Koolhaas the end of the city as a recognizable location, with its specific identity and history, rooted in the lives of its inhabitants. In that sense, Koolhaas’s account of this urban condition is reminiscent of the concept of “non-place”, defined by anthropologist Marc Augé as the space of “supermodernity”, a place without identity, history or social relations.⁵²³ It is remarkable that both essays, by Koolhaas and Augé, written in practically the same period, bear similar chronotopes. Augé’s essay begins with a literary description of a character passing through non-places: a French highway, paying toll with a credit card, a parking garage, an airport lounge, an airplane. Then, Augé sets out to define supermodernity as a current condition, characterized by the excess of time, the excess of space and the excess of individuality. By the excess of time, Augé refers to “the difficulty in thinking about time”, caused by “the overabundance of events” merging the present with the recent past.⁵²⁴ The excess of space is linked to globalization – the possibilities of world-wide

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travel and communication. The excess of individuality, according to Augé, comes with a loss of collective identity. The space that comes with this condition of modernity is presented by Augé as the opposite of “anthropological place”, place rooted in history, embedded in local cultures and practiced through social relations: “places of identity, of relations and of history.”⁵²⁵ Non-place, thus, is a location in which these three elements are absent. In non-place, “there is no room for history unless it has been transformed into an element of spectacle . . . What reigns here is actuality, the urgency of the present moment”.⁵²⁶ The similarity with Koolhaas’s view is striking:

“The Generic City is the city liberated from the captivity of center, from the straitjacket of identity. The Generic City breaks with this destructive cycle of dependence: it is nothing but a reflection of present need and present ability. It is the city without history. . . . It is equally exiting – or unexciting – everywhere. It is ‘superficial’ – like a Hollywood studio lot, it can produce a new identity every Monday morning.”⁵²⁷ *The Generic City* is precisely captured in Augé’s words, as a

521 Rem Koolhaas, “The Generic City”, in *S.M.L.XL*, The Monacelli Press, New York 1995, pp. 1264

522 Ibidem, pp. 1251

523 Marc Augé, *Non-Places. Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*. London / New York (Verso) 1995; oorspr. *Non-Lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*. Paris, 1992.

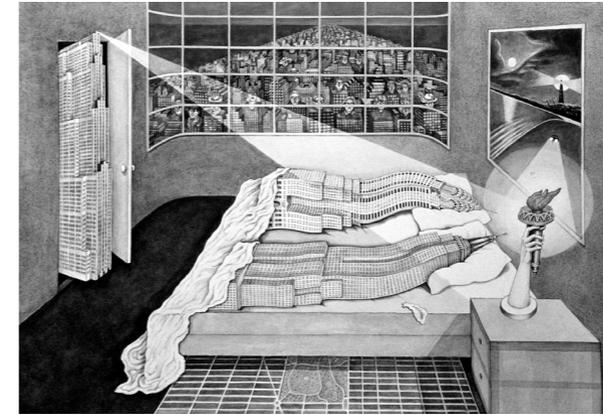
524 Ibidem, p. 30

525 Ibidem, p. 52

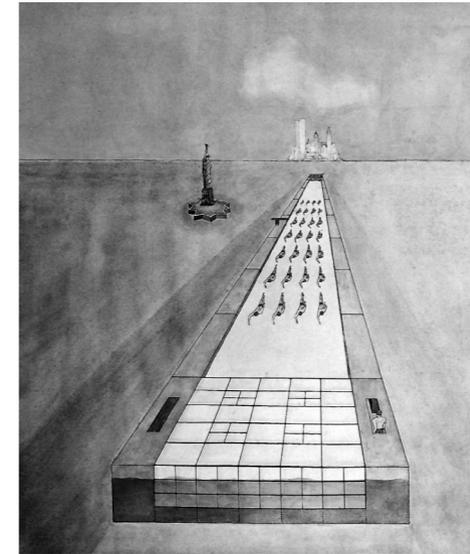
526 Ibidem, pp. 104-104

527 Rem Koolhaas, “The Generic City”, in *S.M.L.XL*, The Monacelli Press, New York 1995, pp. 1249-50

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1 *Delirious New York* as a scriptive project by Rem Koolhaas. Drawing by Madelon Vriesendorp.

2 *The Floating Swimming Pool*, one of the fictional projects in *Delirious New York*.

“... prophetic evocation of spaces in which neither identity, nor relations, nor history really make any sense; spaces in which solitude is experienced as an overburdening or emptying of individuality, in which only the movement of the fleeting images enables the observer to hypothesize the existence of a past and glimpse the possibility of a future.”⁵²⁸

While this last part of *The Generic City* is presented as a screenplay, the rest of the text is meticulously built up as a rational structure, a recipe or, indeed, a prescription, divided in short chapters summing up the elements of the Generic City as a species to be determined by the sum of its separate ingredients. In *Junkspace*, any rational order is absent, no structure at all can be discovered in this text that has hardly any punctuation, no time to pause, a waterfall of observations tumbling over one another in the maelstrom that is the very character of the endless space that Koolhaas wishes to describe: junk. It is a chaotic space without hierarchy, without orientation, defined by details, technology, advertisement. In terms of their subject matter, one might see *The Generic City* and *Junkspace*, respectively a visionary prescription and an exaggerative spatial description of the twenty-first-century megalopolis, as being miles apart from the historical, retroactive manifesto for Manhattan in *Delirious New York*. However, the texts are not so far apart if we consider the fact that Koolhaas reads Manhattan not so much as a historical case, but precisely as a “doctrine” that could “claim its place among contemporary urbanisms”.⁵²⁹ In the end, it is the metropolitan condition that fascinates Koolhaas, and that interests him because of the implications it has for the architectural and urban planning professions. It becomes clear that for Koolhaas, the city does not need to be a clear well-organized system, as European modernism would have wished. Opposed to this traditional

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model, Koolhaas proposes that the metropolis “can be a system of fragments... the remnant of the historical core may be one of multiple realities”.⁵³⁰ Here, we find a clue to the role Koolhaas sees for the architect – a role that comes close to the situationist approach: architecture as a means to reveal, construct, manipulate or transform urban situations.

528 Marc Augé, *Non-Places*, p.87

529 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, p.10

530 Ibidem, p.201

4.3.2 Critique and imagination: projects by Koolhaas/OMA

For Koolhaas, literature is not only a source of inspiration, but also a mode of looking at the world. It is no coincidence that Koolhaas named his office after the metropolitan condition in which the real and the imagined take new positions. The metropolitan condition, states Koolhaas, stands for “reality shortage”.⁵³¹ The aim of OMA, then, was to embrace “aspects of the maligned metropolitan condition with enthusiasm, and which restores mythical, symbolic, literary, oneiric, critical and popular functions to large urban centers.”⁵³² Indeed, OMA’s projects frequently address such issues, critically producing new urban forms and programmes. The rational modern approach is changed for a literary one, making use of fragments, metaphors, characters, playing with the real and imagined in search of architectural and urban “merveilles”.⁵³³ Here we come back to the beginning of this chapter, where a number of literary prescriptions were highlighted. The discussed features in these works are indeed the game played on the borders of reality and imagination, the search for the marvellous, as well as the critical attitude towards society. Rather than “close reading” one of Koolhaas’s architectural projects, like I did in the previous chapters with the works of Bernard Tschumi and Steven Holl, I chose in this case to discuss a larger amount of projects, which allows me to point out how the prescriptive approach of Koolhaas is at stake at different levels and takes on different forms for each task at hand. I need to note here that no difference should be made between Koolhaas’s written and designed projects, in the sense that written works are not explanations of the architectural position of the office, but rather projects in themselves. This is to say that for Koolhaas, architectural production can result in buildings, urban or territorial scenarios,

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or in text.

Already in the early design projects of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), Koolhaas combined his experience with such *scriptive* techniques with a deep interest in the methods of surrealism. Indeed, early architectural projects, such as the *Exodus* competition project, conducted with Elia and Zoe Zenghelis and Madelon Vriesendorp during his study at the AA, can be seen as an urban script; reacting on the real, exaggerating the observed reality, imagining future scenarios. The *Exodus* project imagined an extreme future for London in which part of the historical city would be replaced by a megastructure, a huge strip in which various programmes were placed. Fictive characters (voluntary prisoners) would take part in rituals and events. The Strip is composed as a sequence of squares, like different scenes the characters pass through during the course of the narrative. The project is reminiscent of Archigram’s radical urban scenarios as well as of Constant’s New Babylon, and of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell, in which radical new urban forms are also superimposed on

531 Programmatical text at the founding of O.M.A., in Lotus International #11, 1976, p.34

532 Rem Koolhaas, in: OMA, Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S.M.L.XL*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam 1995, p. 926, originally published at the founding of O.M.A., in Lotus International #11, 1976, p.34

533 It is Roberto Gargiani, who in his work on Koolhaas and OMA uses the term “merveilles” as a common denominator for Koolhaas’ projects. Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas / OMA: The Construction of Merveilles*, EPFL Press/ Routledge, Lausanne, 2008

a decaying London. The surrealist game of the *cadavre exquis*,⁵³⁴ in which each participant draws a part of a creature without seeing the previously drawn parts, was a model for teamwork in the early days of OMA, for example in the competition project for the “Binnenhof” Parliament headquarters in The Hague, 1977-1978. In this project, according to Koolhaas, the transformative nature of both the historical “Binnenhof” site and democratic institutions in general, asked for a radical gesture, a transformation that confronts the existing amalgam of historical buildings with a radical modernity. OMA proposed a horizontal slab, breaching the existing complex, while connected to this axis, a number of volumes with different characters were added. Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis and Zaha Hadid independently developed these volumes, which were then assembled by Koolhaas.⁵³⁵ In later works, Koolhaas also makes use of this method of assembling independent parts. It is indeed a method that allows one to work with chance in design. Sometimes the *cadavre exquis* is not intended as a method, but is welcomed as the outcome of chance in the course of a project. The Dutch Dance Theater in The Hague is such an example – in fact, “Cadavre Exquis” is the title given by Koolhaas to the chapter in *S,M,L,XL* presenting this project.⁵³⁶ The design, originally made for a site in the sea-side town of Scheveningen in the early 1980s, was transplanted in a late phase of the process to the city centre of The Hague, and happened to share the site with a new concert hall by another architect, Van Mourik. The dance theatre and the concert hall were to share the same entrance and lobby. Here, the “accident” is consciously accepted and turned into architectural benefit. The demarcation line of this unintended *cadavre exquis* becomes the most prominent part of the building complex: the lobby. In the competition project for the *Très Grande Bibliothèque* in Paris (1989), chance played a role in the composition of the project by reversing the method of design: instead of building spaces, the most important spaces were conceived as *absence* of building, voids, carved out of a simple volume. By these means, the voids acted as independent entities shaping the rest of the building as if “by accident”. The assemblage of fragments – seemingly randomly in a *cadavre exquis* or consciously composed in a montage – comes back in a number of projects. The *Kunsthal* in Rotterdam (1992) consists of the montage of the exhibition spaces, auditorium, restaurant and other functions along two public routes on the site and the internal route in the building. While at first sight the building may look like a simple box, it is the scenographic assemblage of different spaces – a sloping auditorium, a dark exhibition space with trees, a glazed gallery, an open brightly lit hall – by means of sloping surfaces that generates an experiential complexity quite opposite to the initial “box” appearance. Similarly, the competition project for the Jussieu Library in Paris, France (1993) were seen as “urban scenario’s” within the envelop of a simple volume. In *S,M,L,XL*, the project is presented as a continuous section – indeed, a sequence of spaces of

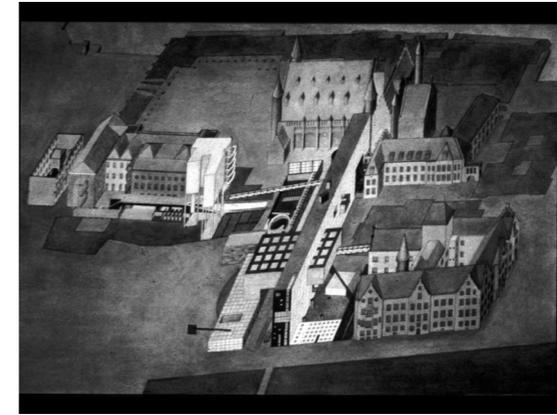
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534 A known painting, which resulted from this work, was *Cadavre Exquis*, made in 1929 by André Breton, Paul Eluard, Valentin Hugo and Tristan Tzara, collection Moderna Museet Stockholm.

535 Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas / OMA: The Construction of Merveilles*, EPFL Press/ Routledge, Lausanne, 2008, p. 77. Project description by OMA in O.M.A., Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S.M.L,XL*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam/ The Monacelli Press, New York 1995, pp. 278-303

536 O.M.A., Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S.M.L,XL*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam/ The Monacelli Press, New York 1995, p. 305

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3 The competition entry for the Dutch Parliament Headquarters, 1977-1978, was conceived as a *Cadavre Exquis*

4 Netherlands Dance Theatre in The Hague: the “accident” of a change of site at a late stage in the process, and sharing the new site with a concert hall by another architect, is consciously accepted and turned into an architectural benefit.

5 Kunsthal, Rotterdam (1992), montage along internal and public routes.

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different height and atmosphere which is experienced as an interior urban route.⁵³⁷ The idea of a continuous sequence of spaces, connected by a sloping route, comes back in the Dutch Embassy in Berlin, built in 2003.

The books *S,M,L,XL* (1995) and *Content* (2004)⁵³⁸ are also projects of assemblage: fragments of different kinds – project descriptions, diary texts, manifestoes, images, graphs, interviews – are held together by means of a metaphorical order. While *S,M,L,XL* is organized around scale –starting with small projects, through the manifesto of “Bigness” to the “extra large” territorial projects – *Content* has a geographical order: the mantra “Go East” starts with OMA’s activities for the magazine *Wired* in San Francisco and the building of the Seattle Public Library and jumps via projects, interview and observations in among others Harvard, New York, São Paulo, Oporto, Berlin and St Petersburg to the mega cities of Beijing and Singapore. In both cases this metaphorical instead of chronological order implies an aspect of chance that renders projects to become neighbours even if their dates of conception are far apart. *Content* may be seen as a journey through the urban phenomena of the early twenty-first century. It gives an account of the world *at that moment*, as Koolhaas states the book is “a product of the moment . . . it is not timeless, it is almost out of date already”.⁵³⁹ Koolhaas’s view is that of a traveller, a well-informed outsider who can report from a critical distance. This character of the traveller, “scouring the earth . . . as a vagabond”, shows resemblance to the position Lefebvre took for his writing, as I discussed earlier in this chapter.⁵⁴⁰ From the point of view of the vagabond, indeed, space is never neutral, it is unstable and dynamic, rendering opportunities to create new stories. And fiction is never far in Koolhaas’s projects. *S,M,L,XL* is presented as

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“a novel about architecture”. It is not a novel in the traditional literary sense, but it is undeniably a product of a “novelist” of architecture: Koolhaas introduces readings of reality, fictions, metaphors and narratives. While OMA’s architectural designs, presented in this book, may introduce new fictions, through their use of characters, through metaphors, spatial sequences and narratives, the context for design tasks, especially on the larger scale, is often “read” as a fiction, which can indeed render clues for design – the projects for New York, for example, based on the hypothesis of Manhattanism. In the “dictionary” in *S,M,L,XL*, Koolhaas quotes the British science-fiction writer J.G. Ballard on the term *fictions*:

“We live in a world ruled by fictions of every kind . . . we live inside an enormous novel. For the writer in particular it is less and less necessary for him to invent the fictional content of his novel. The fiction is already there. The writer’s task is to invent the reality.”⁵⁴¹ This might be the case for the architect as well, Koolhaas seems to suggest. Or maybe, fiction and reality are no longer distinguishable in the metropolitan condition. Is design a fiction, or a future reality, is the “reality” that designers are asked to react upon in any case an objective, rationally

537 O.M.A., Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam/ The Monacelli Press, New York 1995, pp.1318-1326

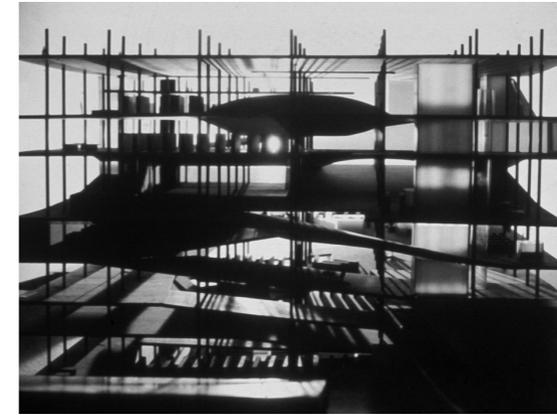
538 AMO/OMA/Rem Koolhaas, *Content*, Taschen, Köln, 2004

539 Ibidem, p.16

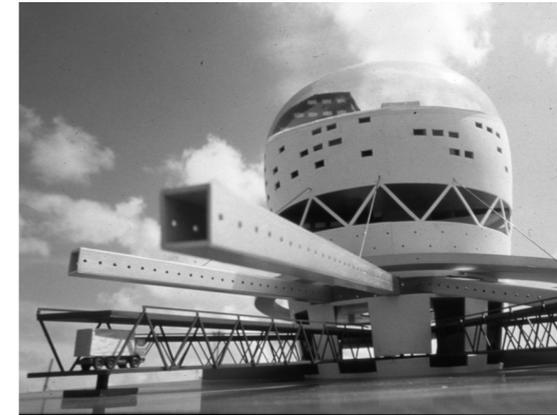
540 See paragraph 4.2.2: Real and imagined: urban scenarios.

541 Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam/ The Monacelli Press, New York 1995, p.492, 1289.

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6 Competition entry for Jussieu Library (1993): section as a sequence of urban scenarios.

7 Zeebrugge Terminal (1989) Metaphors to “free-associate with successive moods- the mechanical, the industrial, the utilitarian, the abstract, the poetic, the surreal”.

explainable one or rather a field of contradicting stories and metaphors? For Koolhaas, fiction seems to work both ways.

In Koolhaas's world, buildings can be characters, such as the New York skyscrapers as depicted by the paintings of Madelon Vriesendorp in *Delirious New York*: sharing a bed, taking part in a scene of love and betrayal. Some OMA-designed buildings, like in the terminal for Zeebrugge (competition, 1989) or the Casa da Musica in Porto (built 2004), seem to be personalities, through their sculptural form proudly taking their place as strangers, just arrived in a city or at the shore. About the sculptural form (a head? an egg? a sort of Zeppelin?) of the Zeebrugge terminal, Koolhaas writes that it should provoke one "to free-associate with successive moods – the mechanical, the industrial, the utilitarian, the abstract, the poetic, the surreal".⁵⁴² In this project, several metaphors appear that stir such associations: the egg, a metaphor that already appeared in the early days of OMA as "The Egg of Columbus",⁵⁴³ a swimming pool, a recurring theme in many of Koolhaas's projects, the "metropolitan" feel of the large entry hall of the terminal. In such architectural projects, metaphors appear as fragments, stirring associations, but in other projects and analyses, especially the ones on a larger scale, they serve as a framework through which a design is approached. In *Delirious New York*, the archipelago of blocks was a metaphor that indeed informed the content and design of the book, while it re-emerged in urban design projects by OMA. The ruin is another metaphor present in Koolhaas's world-view. It emerges in *Delirious New York* in the ruins of Dreamland on Coney Island, a pretext to the final "carcass of Manhattanism" in the last chapter of *Delirious New York*, dramatically entitled "Postmortem". In *Imagining Nothingness*,⁵⁴⁴ Koolhaas points at sites of "nothingness", like the voids caused by bombing in Berlin and Rotterdam, or the ruins of Pompeii, those urban forms lacking walls and roofs. Such urban ruins reveal for him a poetic, surreal essence of urbanity. Instead of a failure of the city, such sites, according to Koolhaas, offer opportunities for new scenarios. Urban studies conducted by OMA often make use of metaphor as an analytical tool; for example the studies on density in the Netherlands of 1996, in which the "culture of congestion" and the Manhattan grid were used to provoke thoughts about spatial planning and density in the Netherlands.⁵⁴⁵ The idea of "metaphoric planning", as introduced in *Delirious New York*, can be understood in this light. The metaphor as a key notion in urban projects can be seen as an alternative to the rigid nature of traditional master planning. Not the rational approach of the Western European urban planners, but imagination stands at the source of this kind of urbanism. The metaphor offers a dynamic framework in which the outcome of design can be influenced by circumstances and chance. Instead of aiming for a fixed result, the metaphorical planner allows the work to react to the momentary,

542 O.M.A., Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S.M.L.XL*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam/ The Monacelli Press, New York 1995, p. 584

543 In 1973, Elia Zenghelis designed "The Egg of Columbus Center" for a site on Manhattan. The egg appeared as well on the drawing that accompanied the manifesto for the Office for Metropolitan Architecture in 1975. IN itself already a reference, the image of the egg shows remarkable similarity to the cracked egg on Dali's painting *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas / OMA: The Construction of Merveilles*, EPFL Press/ Routledge, Lausanne, 2008, p.26

544 Rem Koolhaas, "Imagining Nothingness", in in *S.M.L.XL*, The Monacelli Press, New York 1995, pp. 198-203

545 Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas / OMA: The Construction of Merveilles*, EPFL Press/ Routledge, Lausanne, 2008, p 233

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8 Casa da Musica in Porto (2004). The building as a character, taking place as a stranger in the city.

9 Casa da Musica, Roof terrace

making alternative situations possible. For Koolhaas, such metaphors serve as artistic and critical starting points for design, which can then be rationally developed into new spatial scenarios. Even the future past of cities can be part of such scenarios: “more important than the design of cities,” states Koolhaas, “is the design of their decay.”⁵⁴⁶ Metaphorical planning, in this way implies a dynamic view on time. It allows leaps in time – flashbacks and flashes forward – like the narrative in a novel or film script can be non-chronological to enhance suspense. The metaphor serves as an intellectual filter, through which a critical understanding of contemporary culture is both analysed and expressed, and through which new urban and architectural situations are imagined. We might argue, then, that the metaphor as a framework for architectural projects is an instrumental outcome of the all-encompassing chronotope of Koolhaas’s work: a dynamic view on time, in which past, present and future can coincide in the moment, the contemporary, giving way to spatial scenarios: fragmented, composed of both real and imagined scripts, held together by metaphors and a critical understanding of the (sur)real. It is the character of the vagabond that offers the point of view from which Koolhaas “scours the earth”,⁵⁴⁷ much like the situationists attempted to read the city through their wanderings.⁵⁴⁸ The difference is that Koolhaas not only *reads* the contemporary urban condition, but also *writes* it, in the sense of prescribing its imagined scenarios. This idea of the architect as an author of contemporary culture is aptly expressed by the words of Georges Perec, quoted at the beginning of this chapter: “To cover the world, to cross it in every direction . . . perceiving that the earth is a form of writing, a geography of which . . . we ourselves are the authors.”

546 Ibidem, p.101

547 AMO/OMA/Rem Koolhaas, *Content*, Taschen, Köln, 2004, p.16

548 In fact, the influence of Situationist thought on the book *Content* should not be underestimated: not coincidentally, the logo on the cover shows striking resemblance to the autograph that Constant Nieuwenhuijs signed his works with. AMO/OMA/Rem Koolhaas, *Content*, Taschen, Köln, 2004, Cover, p. 16, 18, 21.

4.3.3 Prescription in architectural education

The discussion of radical artistic practices of the 1960s and 1970s, contemporary scenario planning, and the work of Rem Koolhaas/OMA has shown that a ‘prescriptive’ approach to architecture and urbanism entails the construction of an artistic framework – a chronotope – as an intellectual filter through which to discover, reveal and construct the world. How, then, can architects be educated if their profession entails much more than the craft of architectural design? How can architectural education stimulate students to take a critical stance towards reality, and to make artistic use of real and imagined situations? How can students of architecture be taught to be the *writers* of new spatial scenarios? Like Bernard Tschumi, Rem Koolhaas also taught at the Architectural Association in London in the 1970s. The Diploma Unit he conducted was directly influenced by the studies for *Delirious New York*, which were done in the years before. The “metropolitan ideal and life style”,⁵⁴⁹ was the key subject to be explored through radical scenarios. The aim of the unit was “to rediscover and develop a form of urbanism” which makes use of “new types of architectural scenarios . . .”⁵⁵⁰ Thus, traditional master planning and building design made way for a different approach, in which students were asked to critically react on urban phenomena. Also, surrealist techniques entered teaching: for example, the *Tektonik* sculptures of Malevich served as analytical models to develop architectural volumes without predetermined programmes or materiality.⁵⁵¹ The *cadavre exquis* appeared in design exercises, for example by the assemblage of independent student’s designs as fragments in a larger architectural project, while the use of metaphor was introduced in relation to studies on materiality and detail, in order to develop “eloquent details”.⁵⁵² Teaching at the AA not only allowed Koolhaas to further develop themes of his interest, but also offered students new ways to study architecture. First, the scope of architectural education was enlarged to societal issues such as urban density and the metropolitan life style. Students were asked not only to develop realistic designs, but to relate their design proposals to an ideological position. Projects could also be critical reactions to reality, and act as radical “architectural theorems” rather than buildable designs.⁵⁵³ In this way, students were taught to take a critical stance towards urban phenomena and to use their design skills in addressing ideological questions. Second, the use of methods derived from (surrealist) literature stimulated students to investigate the productive uncertainty of imagination.

In the late 1990s, Rem Koolhaas embarked on another teaching project, this time hosted by the Harvard Design School. In this “Project on the City”, the aim was to “investigate chang-

549 Prospectus of the Architectural Association 1973-1974, as cited in: Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas / OMA: The Construction of Merveilles*, EPFL Press/ Routledge, Lausanne, 2008, p.47

550 Ibidem, pp.48-49

551 Roberto Gargiani, p. 49-50

552 Prospectus of the Architectural Association 1977-1978, as cited in: Roberto Gargiani, *Rem Koolhaas / OMA: The Construction of Merveilles*, EPFL Press/ Routledge, Lausanne, 2008, p. 55. Gargiani explains: “.in 1977-78, [Koolhaas and Zenghelis] called for a study of technical details . . . with the aim of experimenting with the unexpressed metaphorical potential of materials and construction”.

553 Ibidem, p. 49

ing urban conditions in the world”.⁵⁵⁴ Here, students of architecture, landscape architecture and urbanism took on the role of the reporter, travelling to conduct research on site. Like the young Koolhaas in New York, students set out to formulate hypotheses concerning new urban phenomena. The first project, running in 1996-1997, focused on the rapid urbanization taking place in the Chinese Pearl River Delta, and attempted to map out aspects of ideology, money, architecture and landscape. Another project studied the phenomenon of “shopping” and its influence on urban developments in fast-growing urban regions.⁵⁵⁵ In *Great Leap Forward*, the outcome of the Pearl River Delta studies, a number of “copyrighted terms” are introduced, which, according to Koolhaas “represent the beginning of a conceptual framework to describe and interpret the contemporary urban condition”.⁵⁵⁶ As a literary *cadavre exquis*, together, the definitions of the terms the individual students proposed form the overarching term describing the Pearl River Delta’s urban condition: the COED – City of Exacerbated Difference.⁵⁵⁷ In these projects, teaching architecture no longer necessarily resulted in architectural designs. Indeed, the student of architecture is stimulated to take on another role, “scouring the earth” in an attempt to grasp developments that seem beyond comprehension, speculating on the consequences for the design professions. In order to handle the scope of such research projects, students should indeed construct an intellectual framework as a filter through which to view their subject. This framework can be thematic (like landscape, ideology or infrastructure), but also metaphorical or speculative.

In my own teaching at Delft University of Technology, I have attempted to experiment with “prescriptive” design approaches. That is, I have tried to encourage students to investigate the field of tension between reality and imagination, to work with chance, to become aware of the aspect of time in architectural design, and to develop urban and architectural scenarios from a critical view on contemporary conditions. In the diploma studio Public Realm, which investigated the banks of the IJ River in Amsterdam,⁵⁵⁸ Winfried Zwier and Bart Wigger conducted a theoretical study on the phenomenon of “gentrification”, before developing a method to compare different radical urban scenarios by means of analogy. Their “advertisement posters”

554 Program of the Harvard Design School, <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/people/faculty/koolhaas/courses.html>, accessed 21-12-2010

555 The results of these projects were published as: Chuihua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas and Sze Tsung Leong (eds.) *Project on the City 1- Great Leap Forward*, Taschen, Köln / Harvard Design School, Cambridge MA, 2001; Chuihua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas, Sze Tsung Leong (eds.), *Project on the City 2 - Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*, Taschen, Köln / Harvard Design School, Cambridge MA, 2002

556 Rem Koolhaas, introduction to : Chuihua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas and Sze Tsung Leong (eds.) *Project on the City 1- Great Leap Forward*, Taschen, Köln / Harvard Design School, Cambridge MA, 2001, p.28

557 Copyrighted, that is. Therefore, I refer to the definition as presented in *Great Leap Forward*: “ ..the CITY OF EXACERBATED DIFFERENCE© (COED©) .. is based on the greatest possible difference of its parts- complementary or competitive. In a climate of permanent strategic panic, what count in the CITY OF EXACERBATED DIFFERENCE© is not the methodical creation of the idea, but the opportunistic exploitation of flukes, accidents, and imperfections.”, Ibidem, p.29

558 The diploma studio Public Realm at the Faculty of Architecture in Delft is organized by Susanne Komossa and myself. The group that studied the IJ-banks was tutored by myself, Marten de Jong and Jan Engels (tutor building technology) in 2005-2006.

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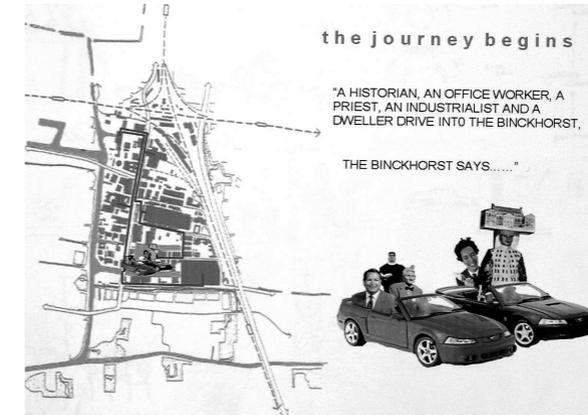
1+2 Public Realm diploma studio IJ-banks Amsterdam 2005-2006, scenarios presented as advertisements, Winfried Zwier and Bart Wigger.

imagined extreme developments concerning the relationship between Amsterdam-North and the historical urban core of Amsterdam south of the IJ. One of these scenarios departed from the statement that the historical core of Amsterdam is a museum, rather than a living city. The scenario involves a protective dome on top of the historical core, while the part of Amsterdam north of the IJ becomes a vibrant, urban hub of high density. Another scenario is built around the idea that the IJ can be a space of leisure. In this scenario, the passage for freight ships is diverted, and the IJ becomes a recreational lake. This scenario inverts the focus of urban life in Amsterdam: the city that used to turn its back to the IJ, focusing on the small scale of the canals, now turns towards the IJ, which becomes a sort of central park. One of the most extreme scenarios the students made is AmsterDAM, in which a huge concrete dam is placed in the IJ, like a Berlin wall separating the two parts of the city, which, over a course of some 20 years, would develop independently. After such a period of time, the city would be reunited, and the North would be explored as the long hidden treasure of Amsterdam. After presenting these scenarios in the form of advertisements, Wigger and Zwier critically investigated the social and spatial implications of the subsequent imagined futures. With the knowledge deriving from this exercise, a proposal was done for a development *in time* of the IJ-banks. Their “docking strip” on the northern IJ-bank offered a framework for temporary and permanent public programmes.

The Public Realm studio of 2006-2007 focused on an industrial area, the Binckhorst,⁵⁵⁹ close to the city centre of The Hague. According to The Hague municipality, this site is to become a new urban quarter with mixed used programmes and high-quality standards. The Public Realm studio moved into the former Caballero factory⁵⁶⁰ and set out to “scour” the surface of the Binckhorst. Here, prescriptive techniques were at stake at different levels; in the making of a film, in the use of fictive characters for site interpretation, and in the development of urban scenes and scenarios. The first impressions of the group were presented in a film: a talk show, hosted in the Caballero factory, featuring student reporters on various sites in the area. After this first exercise in scriptwriting, characters were added to their site interpretation. Adopting the character of an industrialist, a dweller, a historian or a clergyman, students studied a number of sites (or scenes) in the Binckhorst area from different points of view, investigating such issues as functionality, recreation, rituals and frames and structures. They discovered that by looking through a specific lens, they started to notice quite different phenomena than expected. The site research then continued by involving real characters in the project. A night was spent walking through the Binckhorst area with a policeman, getting to know about crime scenes and informal economic activities taking place, interviews were held with the churchgoers of an obscure religious community that held its services in the Binckhorst, and one student spent 24 hours at a gas station, investigating the social practices and rituals

559 The diploma studio Public Realm 2006-2007, studying the Binckhorst, was tutored by myself and Sebastiaan Veldhuisen, while Jan Engels guided the students in the technological elaboration of their design.

560 By now, the factory is in use as a “creative hub”, accommodating companies working in the creative sector. At the time of the studio, the refurbishment of the factory was still in a construction phase. The municipality kindly offered us a space in the building to function as an *in situ* studio.



3



4

3 Public Realm diploma studio Binckhorst (2006-2007), scriptive techniques in site interpretation: site reading from the point of view of another character.

4 Public Realm diploma studio Binckhorst (2006-2007), design proposal for the “re-creation” of the asphalt factory; the dramatic scene of the mourning centre. Wim Kornman, 2007

of car drivers coming and going, taking breaks, polishing their cars, showing off, talking on their phones or meeting each other.

Together, the students read the Binckhorst as a series of *objets-trouvés*, and found fascinating correlations between sites, characters and programmes. The individual design work of the students continued on this track. Mauro Lugaresi proposed an alternative to a master plan for the area, designating sites to be *un-planned* and de-regulated rather than the other way around. In this way, space was provided for marginal use. The elevated highway crossing the area in Lugaresi's proposal would have a two-fold result: first, the Binckhorst was given importance for the city through its high-quality infrastructure, improving the city's connection to the national highway network, while below the highway, a covered space was created, which could accommodate the church congregation, and which would also offer unplanned, hidden spaces, in which marginal practices could take place. Wim Kornman continued on the theme of the spatial *object-trouvé*, while using play and chance, concepts he studied with the *Homo Ludens* theory of Johan Huizinga⁵⁶¹ in mind, as key factors in the development of his design. The big asphalt factory was read by Kornman through the lens of theatre: for him, the site, with its huge concrete constructions and piles of sand, had enormous dramatic potential. This potential was used by proposing another programme on the factory site, indeed, a dramatic one of a mourning centre, connected to the nearby graveyard. The concrete structures were "re-created" as mourning chambers, while the sequence of industrial spaces gave way to a dramatic mourning ritual.

198 The last example I will discuss here is a method for site research and design by means of scriptwriting techniques. When asked to be the course director of an international summer school in Macedonia in 2009,⁵⁶² to address issues of sustainability, I developed, together with Sebas Veldhuisen, the educational strategy *Terristories*, which challenges designers to reach an awareness of the city and the landscape as communicating personalities.⁵⁶³ The goal of the summer school was first of all to raise environmental awareness of different scales in students of architecture, and to generate enthusiasm for such themes through a creative, interdisciplinary approach. We proposed *Terristories* as an educational method with which to address the

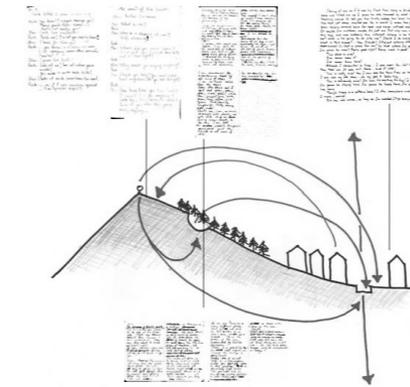
561 For his theory thesis, Wim Kornman got hold of the first edition of Johan Huizinga: *Homo Ludens. Proeve eener bepaling van het spelelement der cultuur*, H.D. Tjeenk Willink, Haarlem 1938. See also note 428 of this chapter.

562 The Terristories workshop was initiated and directed by Klaske Havik (TU Delft), Sebastiaan Veldhuisen (Builddesk sustainable development, Delft) and Lorin Niculae (Ion Mincu University, Bucharest) by invitation of the Faculty of Architecture in Skopje, and co-tutored by Slobodan Veleviski, Marija Mano Velevska, Bojan Karanakov, Filip Cenovski and Mihaljo Zinoski of the Faculty of Architecture in Skopje. A report of this Summer School appeared in: OASE#80 *On Territories*, Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (editors), NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2009, pp. 70-76 The Terristories method was presented at the conference "Teaching a new Environmental Culture: The Environment as a Question of Architectural Education", European Association for Architectural Education, Nicosia, Cyprus May 2010.

563 The philosopher Karsten Harries suggests that human beings have a psychological need to be connected to their environment. He speaks of cities and landscapes as "communicating personalities". Lecture in TU Delft, Delft School of Design, March 13th, 2009. See also Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1997.



5 a



5b



6b

5a+b *Terristories* Summer School, Macedonia 2009, proposed interventions in the town of Kriva Palanka, enhancing social cohesion through public spaces along the river banks.

6a+b *Terristories* Summer School 2009, reading of the life cyclic of the element Earth, showing the reciprocity of scales, the local and the territory.

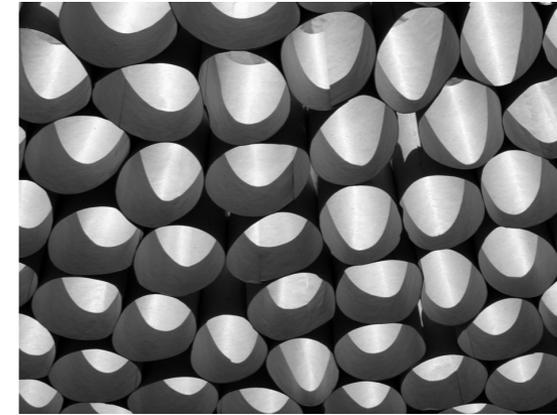
complexity of sustainable design by looking at local conditions as part of the greater territory. By using storytelling as a tool, local specificities are revealed and new possibilities for embedded environmental design are created. *Terristories* was aimed at connecting awareness of the sources of the earth (territory) to literary instruments (stories). A story, indeed, allows us to look from the perspective of another character, to observe and describe local characteristics, and to use narrative as a means to connect activities and events to the spatial setting of the territory. In this way, the use of scriptive instruments provided a means for various scales and viewpoints to come together, and offered a playful and productive way to address sustainability. The basic idea of a *Terristory* is that the students explore their site and its larger territory from the perspective of different “characters”. Depending on the design task at hand, these characters can be stakeholders in a project, but also environmental elements such as water or wood. The first task is to find a trace of the character on all scales. The trace can be represented by an object taken from the site, a sketch or a text. Stories are then composed in which the life cycle of the characters, future events and possible needs and demands for the site and the territory can be imagined. This multi-perspectival analysis generates a broader and more inclusive understanding of the reciprocity of scales and environmental characteristics of the project, and provides the stepping stone for integrated design solutions.

Kriva Palanka, the given site for the summer school, is a town in the northeast of the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, close to the Bulgarian border. The town is located along the Kriva Reka River, in a predominantly agricultural mountainous landscape, currently suffering from a number of social and ecological problems. Mining activities, for example, have caused a rather heavy pollution of the river, which has caused the town to turn its back on the river banks. The workshop has been an attempt to address such questions, and to raise environmental awareness of different scales to architecture students, by investigating the “characters” of water, earth, light, wood and man in regard to the specific sites and landscape of Kriva Palanka. First, students used storytelling techniques to explore the territory of Kriva Palanka, looking through the eyes of “their” character, whether an inhabitant of the town or a more abstract notion such as light. These literary analyses of the territory were translated to project briefs and ambitions on different scales. For example, one group used a fictional family composed of different age groups to search for ways to enhance social interaction in Kriva Palanka. Another group, studying “earth”, elaborated their conceptual dialogues between man and earth, proposing three land art interventions to explore this relationship. The resulting *Terristories* for Kriva Palanka offered proposals for spatial interventions for specific sites throughout the town of Kriva Palanka and the surrounding region. The proposals included, for example, playgrounds for children, meeting places and market stalls, but they also took into account the life cycle of materials and their influence on the landscape. The “water” group, for example, proposed to make the river banks livelier by means of a general strategy for cleaning the river, and a number of site-specific designs for the riverbanks. Through this intensive workshop, the students have become acquainted with thinking, moving and designing through different scales and from different perspectives. The storytelling technique taught the students to develop an awareness for sensory perception of materials and details of the territory. Further, they developed an awareness of the life cycle of materials by means of imagining the mate-

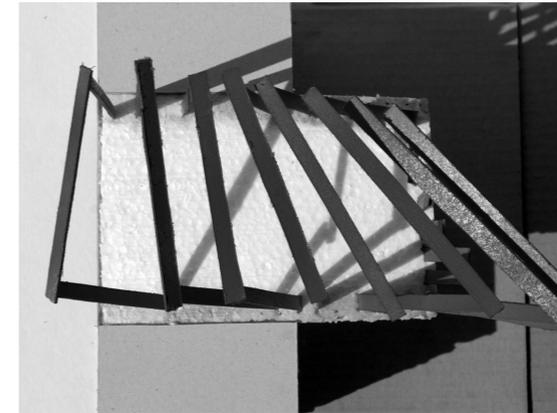
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- 7 *Terristories* Summer School 2009, model group of light.
- 8 *Terristories* Summer School 2009, the river as a character. Models for small interventions at the river banks.
- 9 Exhibition of the five *terristory*s in a large book, presented to the local authorities in Kriva Palanka.

rial as a living character: where did the material come from, how has it been transformed or produced for human use, how will it age? Finally, by means of working with characters, replacing oneself in the mind of another character, with a different background, lifestyle and other incentives, they were encouraged to shift their gaze.

At first sight, the above mentioned educational projects couldn't be more different from each other. The radical scenarios for the IJ-banks seem far removed from the "re-creations" in the Binckhorst, or the sensitive, embedded reading of site-specific characters in the Macedonian workshop. However, they are strongly connected in their approach: they depart from a critical reading of the urban or territorial conditions at hand, opening their view to other disciplines rather than limiting themselves to a mere spatial analysis, and using prescriptive techniques to develop scenarios. In each case, students had to develop an intellectual framework, as a selective filter for their investigations. In the case of the IJ scenarios, a prescriptive chronotope was chosen to critically imagine possible futures: the four proposals were made by means of a limiting space-time construction, which allowed radical positions to be taken as a form of critique. The *Terristories* project, on the other hand, departed from a cyclical concept of time, in relation to a rooted understanding of place, in which the reciprocity of scales was at stake. In the Binckhorst project, the framework was thematically defined after theoretical explorations of (surrealistic) themes such as spontaneity, play and chance. What I have intended to show in the last part of this chapter is that prescription can be used as an educational approach, in which techniques of scriptwriting stimulate the critical thinking and making of urban and architectural scenes. The notions discovered in literary prescriptions, such as the delicate balance between reality and imagination, as well as the use of selective mechanisms such as a chronotope to construct an intellectual filter guiding the artistic production, have been brought into consideration concerning urban spatial questions in the second part of this chapter. Special attention has been devoted to the role of time as an aspect of uncertainty in "prescribing" spatial scenarios. This uncertainty, which might inhibit processes of traditional, functionalist master planning, is here seen as productive factor for design. In architectural and urban design, a prescriptive approach entails the development of alternative scenarios, based on a critical reading of the contemporary conditions, and making use of scriptive techniques that allow the designer to shift his gaze to address the multi-perspectival complexity of design. Let me conclude with a proposal by Henri Lefebvre, written in *The Urban Revolution* in 1970:

"Rather than constructing a model, critical reflection provides an orientation, which opens pathways and reveals a horizon. That is what I am proposing . . . not so much to construct a model of the urban as to open a pathway towards it."⁵⁶⁴ In this chapter I have argued that a prescriptive approach to architectural and urban design indeed offers such a pathway, one that can be used by critical thinkers, professional spatial designers and students alike.

564 Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/London 2003, p. 66 [*La Révolution urbaine*, Editions Gallimard, Paris 1970]

5 Arrival

5.1 The triple bridge in use

5.1.1 EXPLORATIONS: THREE FIELDS, THREE PATHS

This chapter reflects on the spatial composition – the triple bridge – of this work by drawing on its different directions, their commonalities and their differences, and by discussing their validity for discourse, education and practice. I will start by rephrasing the conclusions of description, transcription and prescription, discuss how these paths have bridged the gaps that I introduced in the first chapter, Departure. I will then discuss the connections between these paths and the connections this text makes to other texts – in other words, the intertextuality that is at stake. Then, I will make some distinctions concerning the position and the order of the three elaborations of this scriptive approach. The second section of this chapter will highlight the critical position I have intended to take with this work, regarding architectural discourse, education and practice. In regard to discourse, this “urban literacy” approach offers a dimension of spatial thought that refrains from stylistic or normative categorizations; while the notions developed in this work offer creative tools for architectural education and also provides new perspectives for architects and other spatial designers. In the last section, I will shine a light on the practical potential of the theoretical framework that I have built up through this work. Without limiting its possibilities for other architectural fields, I choose to focus on the public realm, especially in relation to urban regeneration projects, as one of today’s most urgent tasks. The approach that this work proposes, can offer productive ways to address today’s questions concerning the social and experiential aspects of architecture and the city. Finally, the literary bridge makes it possible to introduce another perspective – not only to think about architecture, but also to teach and to practice it.

First, the quest in this work was to address the gap between the discourse of architecture and its experience; in other words, the paradox that architecture as conceived, drawn and discussed, hardly ever coincides with architecture as encountered in real life. The main argument in the chapter Description is that the capacity of literary writers and poets to closely observe and evocatively describe man’s relation to architecture and the city, offers great potential to address experiential issues in architectural practice and education. In the chapter Description, I have therefore started from the viewpoint of literature, and set out to define *what* evocative description of space in literature entails – by actually describing its manifestation in various literary sources. Through a number of evocative literary descriptions, I have shown how writers employ close observation of spatial phenomena,

how they stress emotional qualities of space by focusing on sensory perceptions, and how architecture in literature is intrinsically connected to atmosphere. One crucial advantage of the use of literature to understand the experience of architecture is that it makes it possible to overcome the hegemony of the image: literary descriptions evoke responses to all senses, not only vision. In a time when architecture is dominated by the image, it is important to offer alternative perspectives, which raise an awareness of the other sensory aspects that architecture essentially entails. My argument concerning the evocative capacity of literary description has been framed by a number of important theoretical positions regarding the experiential aspects of architecture. For instance, the concept of *lived* space as defined by Henri Lefebvre has been brought to the fore, while philosophical views were provided by phenomenological theory, placing the body at the centre of spatial perception. The personal attachment of people to place and its meaning in spatial thought and philosophy has been touched upon by discussing the work of Edward S. Casey and Yi-Fu Tuan, while architectural considerations regarding these themes have been brought into play by the writings of Christian Norbergh-Schulz and Juhani Pallasmaa. By connecting insights from the domain of literature to the theoretical discourse on architectural experience, I have argued that developing the skill of *evocative description* allows architects to take a receptive attitude to architecture's experiential potential. A descriptive approach can thus teach architects to pay close attention to materiality, sensory perception, atmosphere and memory – in other words, to the *lived* qualities that architecture and the city can entail. In site interpretation, such an approach implies that site-specific characteristics regarding sensory perception and atmosphere can be mapped, connecting various scales, from urban structure to details. Consequently, I have shown how proposals for architectural and urban interventions can take into account such perceptive and atmospherical qualities. In the last part of the chapter Description, the discussion of both Steven Holl's work and educational experiments has shown a number of possible operational modes for *evocative description* in architectural design.

Second, the work stressed the gap between the design of architecture and its use, between the autonomy of architectural design and the multiple interpretations that the activities taking place within it can generate. It discussed the role of architecture as a setting for human life, connecting spaces, people and activities. It argues that if architecture gains meaning through its use, architecture is always subject to interpretation. The interactivity in literature between writer and reader, in that sense, also counts for the architect and the user or perceiver of architectural space. Transcription, as argued in this chapter, provides an approach to addressing this interactivity, while allowing productive exchanges between disciplines. Before showing how architects explored this dynamic connection between architecture and its use, I brought to the fore the work of a number of theorists who have addressed the social dimension of space. I have continued to discuss the work Henri Lefebvre, specifically his statement that space is socially produced. This

insight gives way to further thoughts about architecture, which, in this way, is seen more as a process than as an object – a process in which various events can unfold in time, like in a literary narrative. Indeed, it is the literary notion of narrative that allows aspects of spatial setting, time and event to be brought together. Connecting the spatial practices of everyday life to the idea of narrative, Michel de Certeau was an important voice in the chapter Transcription, while the relation between time, narration and event has been discussed through the viewpoint of Paul Ricoeur. Richard Sennett's idea of narrative space was also addressed. The chapter Transcription also addresses the dynamic character of literature, which is also explored, for instance, in the experimental work of the Oulipo group, who used rules and constraints in a productive way to reach new, *potential* literature. Here, the process of writing itself is the subject of study and exploration – much like architects have investigated the potentiality of the process of architecture by means of critical analysis, deconstruction or transformation. The chapter shows how architects such as Daniel Libeskind and Peter Eisenman, and specifically Bernard Tschumi, have experimented with such ideas as the process of architecture, the dynamics between architecture and its use, and have attempted to transcribe notions from other disciplines to architecture. While Bernard Tschumi used the experimental character of transcription to invent new architectural compositions, the crucial benefit from transcriptive experiments in his work lies in the bringing together of space, movement and event. This made it possible to see architecture as an essentially social product, and architectural design as a social act. The chapter Transcription thus ultimately points out the idea that architecture is never neutral, that it is intrinsically related to its use and interpretation, and that experimental practices embroidering on literary examples provide the potential for productive exchanges – between architect and user, and between disciplines.

Third, the work dealt with the field of tension between reality and imagination, and, consequently, between permanence and temporality: architects and planners design spatial futures based on an existing reality, while the influence of time cannot be totally foreseen. Design, therefore, is also an act of speculation. Embedded in statements about the imagined future is thus a critique of the present reality. Architects need to position themselves vis-à-vis this aspect of indeterminacy and seek an appropriate balance between reality and imagination. This balance between reality and imagination is discussed in the chapter Prescription by reflecting on Edward Soja's notion of real-and-imagined places, as well as on recent research regarding the aspect of indeterminacy in architecture. The concept of "chronotope", introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin as a framework connecting space and time in a work of literature, has come to the fore as an instrument that could also be of use to discuss such architectural positions regarding space and time. This spatio-temporal framework, which functions as a filter through which the ingredients of a story (spatial settings, characters, events) are filtered, can be of use in architecture and urban planning, in which imaginative thinking about new spatial and temporal realities is at stake. As examples, the chronotopes underlying

the work of architects John Hejduk and Aldo Rossi have been placed in this light, showing that both architects take different positions regarding the role of time, while consciously positioning their work in terms of looking at reality and using imagination to react upon it. Literary writers, I showed in the chapter Prescription, have emphasized this intriguing balance between reality and imagination, as well as the role of indeterminacy in this regard. For example by using architectural metaphors to create radical perspectives of future worlds, which allowed literary writers to speculate on the future and criticize reality. Making a comparison to the field of architecture, the radical scenarios of groups such as Archigram and Superstudio come to mind. The chapter thus highlights how, on the one hand, radical architecture practices in the 1960s and 1970s proposed radical speculations on spatial futures, while on the other hand more recent urban planning practices make use of scenario techniques to deal with the multiplicity of potential alternative futures. Others claim that the demarcation lines between reality and imagination are often hard to distinguish. I have discussed how the magic realist writers pondered on the aspects of myth and illusion in existing reality. In the work of John Hejduk, for instance, one indeed finds a similar fusion between reality and imagination – his account of the cities described and depicted in his *Masque* series could be characterized as magic-realistic. Also, I have shown how surrealist writers, on the other hand, stressed the role of imagination beyond reality, by deliberately seeking tools with which to address aspects of indeterminacy. Such tools include automatic writing, the *cadavre exquis*, the narrated dream and other forms of stirring imaginative thought such as the paranoid critical method. Continuing architectural considerations, I discussed the work of Rem Koolhaas in more detail, showing how such scriptive tools, ranging from surrealist techniques to scenography and speculation, are used in approaching architecture and the contemporary urban conditions as a kind of fictions that can be analysed and re-written, or newly constructed.

5.1.2 CONNECTIONS: INTERTEXTUALITY

Bringing into play the interactivity between subject and object, author and user, and reality and imagination is a challenge for the architectural debate. It is through the looking glass of literature that I have been able to bridge these seemingly binary oppositions. While the Description chapter highlighted the meticulous descriptions that novels and poems can offer of the lived experience of the built environment, the chapter Prescription presented literary accounts of future scenarios and critical views of the present world. The notion of Transcription touched upon the relation between the writer and the text as well as between the text and its reader. It thereby introduced the social dynamics of space in literature. The three notions description transcription and prescription, derived from literature, have thus

provided the tools to bring together theories about the perception of architecture, social spatial practices and critical artistic production. Together, they have allowed me to explore the potential use of literary concepts in architectural design and education. The three scriptive notions that I have introduced here are by no means to be understood as inclusive, nor should they be read as three separate paths. Coming back to the metaphor of the bridge, the three branches work together in constructing the space of the bridge itself, while here and there, connections between the branches, as well as openings to other literary fields of investigation can be found. In that sense, the work is saturated with references both within and outside the work itself. As Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality⁵⁶⁵ suggests, a text does not exist in isolation, on the contrary, through direct and hidden references and quotes, a text is built up out of many other fragments of texts. In this particular work, it is clear that many references are made to texts from various fields: literary, philosophical, sociological, artistic, etcetera. The text is thus stratified, it is composed of layers. Behind the layer of the argument itself, for instance, is the layer of the direct quotations: fragments of other texts, literary or theoretical, literally quoted in the very body of this work, taking part in the construction of the argument. A second line of references is present in the notes, some 160 per chapter, referring to sources of, again, both literary and scholarly texts. The notes indicate the width of the frame of reference that my topic implies: bridging distances between different fields, the amount of voices that needed to have their say in and under the text is relatively large. These authors in their turn also refer to others – for instance, one cannot quote Edward Soja⁵⁶⁶ without hearing the reverberations of Lefebvre's work, or refer to Jennifer Bloomer's *Architecture and the Text*⁵⁶⁷ without indirectly pointing to the works of Joyce and Piranesi, while Joyce's *Ulysses*, in turn, points back to Homer's epic *Odyssee*. One piece of text thus cascades into a river of many other texts, some of which, in the second or third degree of reference, may not even be known by the author. There is a role for the reader to discover such hidden connections and references, and play with this spatial complexity to construct his or her "own version" of the text. Another layer of intertextuality can be found within the work itself, since connections between the three paths are established on many levels. Even if each of the chapters can be read separately, the reader of the whole work will come across a number of themes that reverberate between them, and that are looked upon from slightly different perspectives. Such themes include atmosphere, metaphor, temporality, or the search for moments of experience. It is not my intention here to indicate the locations of such intersect-

⁵⁶⁵ In Julia Kristeva, *Word, Dialogue and Novel*, (1969), a study on the work of Bakhtin, Kristeva introduces the term *intertextuality* to address the idea that every text contains numerous references to other texts, and therefore multiple layers of meaning that are to the reader to discover or even construct.

⁵⁶⁶ Edward Soja, *Thirdspace, journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1999 [1996]

⁵⁶⁷ Jennifer Bloomer, *Architecture and the Text: the (s)cripts of Joyce and Piranesi*, Yale University Press, New Haven/ London 1993

ing themes – indeed, the discovery of these should be part of the joy of reading. Let me just highlight one theme that resonates through the whole work: the idea of “moments” of architectural experience. In the chapter Description, the extraordinary moment of architectural experience is discussed in the context of phenomenology: the moment of architectural experience is the moment when space is experienced directly, before reflection. Only from a receptive state of openness and innocence is one able to capture such moments, according to theorists such as Yi-Fu Tuan and Gaston Bachelard. This receptivity, as I argue in this chapter, is a quality of literary writers, and specifically of poets. The “poetic moment” of spatial experience is a complex moment when the subject-object relation becomes reversible, as if it is the object or the space itself that acts: stirring the imagination of the observer. Then, the subjective observer becomes the object that is “touched”. While in the chapter Description, the moment of experience is thus defined by the receptivity of the observer and by a momentary inversion between subject and object, in the chapter Transcription temporality is at stake when defining the moment of experience. Following the discussion of spatial practice and narrative by Michel de Certeau and Paul Ricoeur, narrative offers the possibility for past, present and future to coincide. Intersections of different temporalities, as well as intersections of the reader and the writer are at stake here. Taken to architecture, these intersections between seemingly conflicting notions lead to a dynamic idea of architecture, in which the moment of intense architectural experience is triggered by the event, the unusual activity that can take place in space. Architect Bernard Tschumi speaks of the “moment of architecture” as a moment when the borders between such categories as intuition and intellect, concept and experience, real and ideal, are transgressed. The chapter Prescription discusses not the experience of such moments, but rather their creation. For instance, the Situationist International group, discussed in this chapter as an exemplary prescriptive practice, aimed to create “situations”. Such situations are indeed moments that offer an “other” experience of urban place. The notion of chronotope, discussed in the context of the work of architects Rossi, Hejduk and Koolhaas, makes it possible to address this idea of moments in architectural experience. The notion of moment also comes to the fore in the discussion of Koolhaas’s work, in which indeed different temporalities merge in an all-encompassing “contemporality”. Throughout the three chapters, it thus becomes clear that there is more to the coming together of different temporal experiences, of detail and whole, of maker and perceiver, of intuition and intellect. This intersection constitutes precisely the moment of extraordinary architectural experience, which is in that sense much like moments of intense love or moments of scientific discovery: for a moment, past and future are both there, fading within the moment. Detail and whole, intuition and intellect all come together into the very moment of intense experience. Indeed, read in this way, this whole work can be seen to centre on this idea of the moment of intense architectural experience. It is a moment in which contradictory elements coincide: the subject and the object, the individual and the collective, intuition and intel-

lect, the past, present and future, the conceived and the perceived. And it is this ambiguity, this coexistence of differences that make up the extraordinary, which is found in literature: in the poet’s unusual images and his discovery of universality in the details, in the experimental complexity of Joyce and Danielewski, in the surrealist’s quest for the merging of dream and reality, in the search for the marvellous of the magic realists. It is indeed in literature that vivid accounts of such “moments of architecture” can be found, and through a literary gaze that the passages to construct and experience them can be discovered.

5.1.3 DISTINCTIONS: READING, TELLING, WRITING PLACES

The three chapters can be read separately – each connects the disciplines of architecture and literature in its own way, providing a slightly different perspective and touching upon different theories. Even though the order of the chapters is non-hierarchical – the chapter Prescription, for example, can be read without the knowledge of Description – there is of course a reason for their order of appearance. Between the lines of the discussion on the three notions and the three paradoxes they address, the argument at large, concerning the experiential qualities of architecture that can be accessed through literature, is constructed in three successive steps: starting from the fundamental aspect of lived experience, via the complex field of social spatial practices, to the critical and imaginative. Even though each of the notions is applicable in all stages and on all scales of design, these steps, in some way, are also steps in scale. Presumably, Description is the most detailed of the three branches, dealing with architecture’s materiality, the human experience and the human scale. The chapter offers literary descriptions of architectural spaces that are personal accounts of these spaces – experienced and lived-through by the literary character or by the writer or poet. In other words, what is at stake here is the relation between architecture in its physical appearance and the individual perceiver. This is not to say that this issue is limited to the private, individual domain. On the contrary, much like the literary descriptions of architecture, such perceptions can take on universal value, as has been noted in the chapter through the discussion on trans-subjectivity in poetry. Description, more than the other chapters, is the place to *read*, as an individual act: the intimacy between the book and the reader, the intimacy between the materiality, the smells and the atmospheres of architecture, similar but never experienced exactly the same for each individual. The chapter Transcription, then, moves to the street, to the public spaces where social activity takes place. In that sense, Transcription is the most urban part of the bridge, allowing people to meet, offering narrative as a concept in which events can unfold in space and time. The urban space is the space

of multiple narratives, of interpretation, of interaction. Transcription, then, is the place to *talk*. It states that if space is socially produced, then architecture has a role in creating the conditions for social exchange. A transcriptive approach to architectural design thus implies the making of *telling* places. Finally, Prescription moves to a much larger scale. Here, the idea of a world-view is at stake; the view on reality and imagined futures. In Prescription, details matter if they stand for a larger story, much like the highly individual use of chance by the surrealists was also a search for something larger: the universal power of the imagination. In Prescriptive design approaches, as opposed to the Descriptive, place does not play such a large role as a focal point for design. The observations concerning physical sites are rather subject to selective filtering, generating themes and metaphors for the construction of larger stories, claiming validity over much larger domains. If prescription entails the revealing of imaginative powers and the construction of new spatial stories, it is pre-eminently the place to *write*.

The bridge thus offers pathways connecting to different levels of scale, and to different aspects of literary activity: to read, to tell and to write. These pathways are intrinsically connected, together forming the meaningful space of the bridge itself. In that context, Jennifer Bloomers remark on the architectural qualities of complex literary works is highly appropriate. She expresses her interest in novels – specifically those of James Joyce – with an almost architectural complexity, which allows the text to be read in multiple ways, establishing relations between “parts and structure – or apparatus – of the text”.⁵⁶⁸ She states that the meaning of a novel can then be found not only in the narrative itself, but also in the many connections that the apparatus makes possible. Rephrasing her words in the context of this work I would state that, indeed, the “apparatus” of this text, the metaphorical bridge, offers viewpoints from one part to the others, making connections at different levels of scale and meaning. The threefold construction can be regarded as a bridge in itself, and simultaneously as three different perspectives that, in turn, accommodate connections and openings to further exploration. It is through the spatial complexity of this work that it hopefully offers more than just a span between one discipline and the other, more than an introduction of what a literary approach to architecture might entail. By means of such operations, the construction of the triad attempts to escape from binary oppositions, and intends to open a debate rather than conclude it.

568 Jennifer Bloomer, *The Architecture and the Text: The (S)cripts of Joyce and Piranesi*, Yale University Press, New Haven / London, 1993, p.145

5.2. The river: reflections

5.2.1 OPENING PERSPECTIVES: DISCOURSE

In this work, I have tried to find a way around the ways architecture is generally theorized – a way around stylistic or normative categorization, “isms” or chronological periodization. If the famous Vitruvian triad of *firmitas*, *venustas* en *utilitas* was meant to express three interconnected qualities that each work of architecture should embody, architectural discourse seemed too often to regard these notions as separating, differentiating categories of architecture. The idea of *firmitas* has been associated with constructivist and high-tech architecture, *utilitas* has been said to be the main concern for functionalist architects, while *venustas* has been connected to aesthetic movements in architecture. Such categorizations, which divided rather than connected architectural practices, was propagated through exhibitions highlighting specific “isms”, such as the famous exhibitions on the International Style or on deconstructivism in New York.⁵⁶⁹ Charles Jencks was one of the most influential players in this tendency to practice architectural discourse, advocating such ordering in architectural movements. Even in contemporary discourse it is still fashionable to speak in such terms: super- or hypermodernism, neo-expressionism or neo-traditionalism, as Dutch architecture critic Bernard Hulsman presented current developments in Dutch architecture in the national newspapers in recent years. During my work as an editor for the Dutch architectural review *de Architect* in the early years after the turn of the millennium, I noticed that my appreciation for architectural projects had nothing to do with style, “isms” or other such categories. On the contrary, the most interesting architects, urban planners and landscape architects I have met and interviewed, and whose works I have visited, had quite divergent ideas on architectural aesthetics, but they appeared to have a certain communality in the way they approached their *metier*. This had to do with a certain sensitivity to themes that had remained rather hidden in the architectural discourse of these days: sensory perception, the everyday perspective of users, as well as issues of uncertainty and temporality. With my work, I have attempted to bring such insights, via the field of literature, into the architectural debate.

Certainly, my attempt to avoid normative of stylistic categorization in architectural thought is by far not the first. Christopher Alexander, for instance, moved beyond the discussion of style in his search for architectural and urban patterns in his seminal book *A Pattern Language*, offering a view on architecture by means of the

569 The exhibition *The International Style* was curated by Henry-Russel Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1932; The exhibition *Deconstructivist Architecture* was curated by Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1988

patterns of daily spatial practice by users.⁵⁷⁰ The architects of the Team 10 group sought another dimension on architectural thought by thinking about architecture in terms of social and spatial relations, concentrating on thematic issues such as “everyday-ness”.⁵⁷¹ Architects such as Alvaro Siza in Portugal and Alvar Aalto in Finland avoided categorization by taking up positions in between the international “modernism” and the vernacular, or between abstraction and ornamentation. Such examples indeed show how some architects have managed to shift the gaze with which architecture is looked at.

With this work I have thus tried to formulate a dimension of architectural thought without stranding in styles, standards, norms or recipes, and I have found that literature offers a way out of such reductive models: through imagination, observation and the use of literary devices such as (fictive) characters and narratives, literary texts can bring to the fore theoretical insights without the limitation of categorization. Via the route of literature, I have thus found a way to address essential themes in architecture, to link them to theories from different fields such as philosophy, behavioural sciences and geography, and to discuss the work of divergent architects without submitting them to a comparative analysis, or reducing them to followers of a movement. Indeed, I have been searching for another frame from which to look at architecture, but also to practice and to teach it. The notion of chronotope, as discussed in the chapter Prescription, can be seen as such a frame to make links between works of literature – links that are not historical or stylistic, but instead address the relation between spatial and temporal dimensions from another perspective. Similarly, I have attempted to provide other viewpoints from which to approach the architectural themes (or paradoxes) at hand. In each chapter, I have offered scriptive concepts, which do not exclude each other, but rather constitute a kaleidoscopic platform with viewpoints in different directions – indeed, the space of the bridge itself. Thereby, the whole work intends to focus on the opening of multiple perspectives rather than on the closure of a fixed argument. Again, a resonance with Henri Lefebvre’s work comes to the fore. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre named his last chapter “Openings”. Indeed, as Edward Soja stated, in the radical openness of Lefebvre’s spatial thinking, “there are no ‘conclusions’ that are not also ‘openings’”.⁵⁷²

570 Christopher Alexander, *A Pattern Language*. Oxford University Press, New York 1977.

571 For a detailed discussion on TeamX’s contribution to architectural discourse see for instance Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel (eds.) *Team 10 1953-1981. In search of a Utopia of the Present*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2005 and Tom Avermaete *Another Modern: The Postwar Architecture and Urbanism of Candilis-Josic-Woods*, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam 2005

572 Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK 1996, p. 9

5.2.2 OFFERING DIRECTIONS: EDUCATION

The work also functions as a critique on a lacuna that I have experienced in regular architectural education. While issues of programme, function, formal composition and image are often emphasized in the curricula of schools of architecture, some other important themes have been left largely unmentioned: architectural perception, the role of the user (spatial practices) and the role of time. My framework of scriptive perspectives offers a threefold educational approach to overcome these gaps, by offering creative tools at different levels of complexity that can be used in different phases of the architectural, urban or landscape design curriculum.

Descriptive exercises can encourage students as early as in the first year of study to develop an awareness of the perceptual qualities of architecture, for example by creative writing exercises addressing the senses. In later years, more complex tasks of site-writing can enrich students’ understanding of sites as *lived* places, while descriptive tasks regarding their own architectural projects can offer critical insights regarding their own design decisions. The numerous experiments I have carried out with student projects in Delft and elsewhere showed that students, when challenged to describe tactile and audible aspects of their own design works, develop a critical understanding of the role of materiality and detail in the perception of architecture, and consequently elaborate their designs accordingly. Transcriptive tools in education are useful in addressing the role of the user in urban and architectural space, and allow the inclusion of “other” perspectives in design. First, the notion of narrative helps students to understand the relation between space and the activities that it can allow or provoke. By constructing narratives in relation to their own site analysis and design, students become aware of the diversity of use and the multiplicity of possible events that spatial settings can offer. Second, the literary character is a creative tool in addressing the user’s perspective: by imagining how spaces are experienced and used by other characters, students reach a better understanding of the conditions their design could offer for different types of users. Finally, transcription also involves an experimental aspect: the idea of transcription as the construction of “another version” is a challenging starting point for exercises dealing with the active relationship between architect and user, taking into account the *other* version that the user of a work of architecture produces. Prescriptive courses in architectural education include the design of scenarios. For instance in the first weeks of a design project, this tool is productive to open thoughts about uncertainties in terms of technological possibilities, use or even the climatological position of a site. In this way, the notion of indeterminacy is brought into play, while the scenarios provide radical stances that can be discussed, criticized, and elaborated to develop conditions for further design. The surrealist techniques discussed in the Prescription chapter are also used as creative tools in architectural education. The idea of automatic writing, which temporally eliminates self-censorship, is a productive tool in brainstorm processes,

while the *cadavre exquis* as design exercise stimulates teamwork for the unexpected connections that can arise. The paranoid critical method as used by Koolhaas helps to maintain consistency in creative ideas throughout a project, and to connect all levels of scale, from the urban and territorial to the architectural detail. Finally, encouraging the use of metaphors and forms of fiction in site-specific projects helps to understand and use the “marvellous” dimension that lies hidden in every single place.

5.2.3 POSITIONING FIELDS: ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN PRACTICE

Besides discourse and education, architectural and urban practice can also benefit from such a literary viewpoint. Especially now that old codes and models of spatial development have become unstable due to the economical instability of the last few years, another approach to spatial development is needed. Policymakers and project developers are also coming to realize that the rigidity of traditional master planning and of precise calculations of benefits can no longer be accounted for. Instead of such fixed planning schemes, another form of practice emerges, in which different disciplines operate together and in which attention for spatial practices and for the experience of the public realm is key to success. The *Urban Literacy* approach to spatial developments allows for an integrated design attitude. The three concepts description, transcription and prescription each offer tools for practicing architects and planners, which can be used both in site analysis and in architectural and urban design.

For site analysis, the descriptive implies that the multiple layers of a site are described by means of closely observing phenomenological aspects of a site. Various techniques of description can be put into play here. For instance, by concentrating on a single phenomenon each time in a series of descriptions, and by repeating such descriptive exercises multiple times, it is possible to take into account the experience of the site at different times of the day, under different circumstances. Another way of generating more knowledge about a site, as has been discussed in the chapter Transcription, is to use existing narratives, which reveal the *lived* account of users and inhabitants. Such narratives can be found in myths, in stories and novels regarding a specific place, or they can be revealed by means of on-site interviews. By looking at narratives, the character (a user, inhabitant or other stakeholder) also comes into play. Transcriptive site research thereby offers ways to include users’ perspectives and investigate the role of activities and events in the way a site is socially embedded in a city. Techniques discussed in the chapter Prescription offer other ways to deal with the reality of a given site – precisely by immediately countering it with imagination. Automatic writing, a tool derived from

surrealist writers, is a scriptive tool that generates associative connections and metaphors regarding the site at hand. The paranoid critical, likewise derived from surrealist practices, is a technique that conducts site analysis from a very specific viewpoint, informed by a (fictional) hypothesis or metaphor. This way of site interpretation can generate extremely precise and focused details that would otherwise have slipped by without being noticed. Such prescriptive site research, departing from fictional and metaphorical viewpoints, opens up new themes and conditions for design.

Looking at architectural and urban design through literature offers a great set of techniques that can be employed in practice at different scales and in different phases of the design process. The receptive attitude of the poet offers ways to pay attention to perceptual details and play with the subject-object relationship through evocation, both in writing and in drawing. The metaphor can be a powerful literary tool creating a clear conceptual point of departure for a project, which can guide design decisions. As shown in the chapter Description, Steven Holl frequently uses metaphors in his work, which offer guidance for design as well as recognition for the perceiver of the building. Rem Koolhaas, as discussed in the Prescription chapter, also proposed “metaphorical planning” on an urban level in *Delirious New York*. The metaphor thus offers both a critical tool to “read” a site and an artistic tool for design. The literary character can be used in several ways. Not only can buildings be conceived as characters, indeed in a metaphorical way as several projects by Holl and Koolhaas have shown, character is also a very productive tool to include the user’s perspective in architecture. For instance, a possible technique is to take on the perspective of another character, so that the designer for a moment experiences the spatial composition and materiality of the design as if he or she were a future user. From this perspective, design decisions can be critically evaluated. Especially on an urban scale, narrative is an excellent tool to use when taking the social dimension of architecture into account. Narrative can be brought into play when confronting the design with the possible uses and events that it may accommodate. Narrative exercises provide a means to bring together spaces, movements and events. The work of Bernard Tschumi has been discussed in this context in the chapter Transcription. Scenario is a literary tool that helps to imagine multiple possibilities by means of posing *what if* questions in regard to future developments, while an architectural design itself can also be conceived as a scenario: offering sequences of architectural experiences, frame after frame, moving from one spatial setting to the other.

In design, descriptive, transcriptive and prescriptive tools can be used simultaneously. The three paths, in that way, present three different elaborations of the same approach, which can be used accordingly for every design task at hand. For example, prescriptive scenarios, offering alternatives for future development, can be linked to evocative descriptions of perceptual qualities. The threefold bridge of description, transcription and prescription thus provides possibilities for paral-

lel movements between theoretical thought and architectural practice, between intellect and experience. Ultimately, the bridge of *urban literacy* stages the position of the architect: the architect becomes the one who realizes that there are multiple paths, and that the key task is to creatively use and integrate them, not into one solution, but into multiple alternatives that a design can make possible. The architect who does not limit his view to a bird's-eye perspective, but one who also takes a stance for the poetic detail of materiality; who addresses, through the gaze of literature, existential themes; who explores the borders between bodily experience and intellectual discourse; who mediates between the subject and the object, the individual and the collective; who offers conditions for spatial practice and architectural experience. The architect who can read context as if it were a marvelous fiction, who can superimpose the layers of a site – the visual, the auditive, the role of the wind and the shadow, the stories of inhabitants, the surreal associations; who can indeed compose a stratified understanding of place by taking a path with different viewpoints, back, forward, left and right, up and down, and from there, from these combined perspectives, can draw a new vision, by making space and leaving space untouched, by opening new perspectives, offering directions and establishing fields, not only metaphorically, but also in a physical sense.

5.3 The banks: grounding in context

5.3.1 THE FIELD: THE PUBLIC REALM

The following paragraphs will shine a light on the possible use of the theoretical framework that I have built up through this work. Without limiting its possibilities for other architectural fields, I choose to focus on the public realm, especially in relation to urban regeneration projects, as one of today's most urgent tasks. I will introduce the field of the public realm, the task of urban regeneration and position my framework vis-à-vis the most recent alternative approaches in this field. Even though the claims made in this dissertation about the potential of this literary approach are of a general character, expanding the field of architecture rather than posing its limits, most of the educational and architectural examples I have referred to relate to public urban spaces. This is for a reason. So far, most theory exploring the connection between literature and architecture has predominantly concerned private spaces.⁵⁷³ Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, for example, focuses on the intimate spaces of the house as generators of poetic experience,

⁵⁷³ See for example: Marilyn R. Chandler, *Dwelling in the Text. Houses in American Fiction*, University of California Press, Los Angeles/ London, 1991 and Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space. The classic look at how we experience intimate places*, Beacon Press, Boston 1994 [1964]

while Marilyn Chandler investigates the role of the home in American literature. According to Belgian architect Wim Cuyvers, this focus on the private space in architecture-literature discussions is understandable: "It seems a given that *one's own* place should be . . . the locus of the existential. So for architects it was self-evident to regard the house as the ideal space to situate the themes and the insights from the novels"⁵⁷⁴. However, the private space of the house is only available to those who can afford it, writes Cuyvers: ". . . we come to the terrible realization that the home, which we thought was the ideal environment to *be*, to reflect on existence, is a place reserved exclusively for those who *have* . . . And suddenly," Cuyvers writes with a sense of urgency, "the house of built architecture is shaken to its very foundations, it collapses like a house of cards, and all that remains is the possibility of searching for a radically overarching position: away from the house, away from the space that you must *have* towards the space of *being*, away from the private space towards the public space."⁵⁷⁵ The public space, indeed, is proposed here as the very space for investigations on how people experience and *live* architecture in all its complexity and emotional richness. Therefore, I argue that the literary approach that I have introduced here, should be introduced in the discourse on the public realm.⁵⁷⁶ In contemporary society, is there still such a notion as the public realm, as theorists such as Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas and Richard Sennett characterized it,⁵⁷⁷ or do people become detached from their physical environment, no longer needing the city and its architecture? Indeed, the state of the public realm in the contemporary city has become diffuse: public and private often overlap, social events takes place in privatized spheres, while public spaces seem more and more controlled by surveillance systems. On top of that, the virtual realm has introduced new ways of communication that seem to be able to do without physical space. Contemporary communication techniques, though connecting people through technological means, tend to create a distance between people and their physical environment. Paradoxically, in order to cope with globalization processes, the local becomes more important, not for economic reasons, but from an existential perspective: quality of place has become the key reason for people to choose where to live. If the public realm is indeed one of the essential features

⁵⁷⁴ Wim Cuyvers, "From the Dream of the Novel Turned to Stone to the Acknowledgement of Public Space" in OASE#70, *Architecture&Literature,reflections / imaginations*, Christoph Grafe, Klaske Havik, Madeleine Maaskant (eds), Rotterdam 2006, p. 25

⁵⁷⁵ Ibidem.

⁵⁷⁶ The conceptualisation of the Public Sphere and the changing definitions of public and private has extensively been discussed in our book *Architectural Positions. Architectural Positions. Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere*, Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (eds.), Sun Publishers, Nijmegen, 2009. See especially the theoretical introduction, pp. 17-45 and the introduction to the chapter Definitions, pp. 49-53

⁵⁷⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*. Luchterhand Verlag, Darmstadt 1962; English trans. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society. Studies in contemporary German social thought*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1989; Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*. Vintage, New York 1977

of urban life: the place where people meet, the exchange of thoughts and ideas in urban space, the celebration of difference, the interactivity between urban space and the everyday practice of its inhabitants – then providing conditions for a lively, well-functioning public realm is an important task for contemporary architects and urban planners. It is through an inclusive gaze, addressing these interactions between space and use, individual and collective, subject and object, that such conditions for a public realm can be thought and produced.

5.3.2 THE CITY: URBAN REGENERATION⁵⁷⁸

In many cities, abandoned industrial sites offer possibilities for the development of new urban life close to the historic city centres. Writers, artists and other creative professionals are often the first to discover the strong potential and rough aesthetics of such industrial wastelands, which in some cases is the start of alternative bottom-up processes of urban regeneration. Such artistic users have the capacity to recognize the social and atmospherical potential of places, appreciating the uncertainties of indeterminacy. In this way, many former harbour areas, industrial zones and abandoned factories across Europe have become breeding grounds of cultural and creative economies.⁵⁷⁹ The potential of such creative approaches has since been recognized by planners and policymakers, who realize that taking into account site-specific perceptual and atmospheric qualities, along with the active involvement of local actors, is key to successful spatial development. In this context, new approaches such as “Urban Innovation”, “Temporary Use”, “Incubator policy” and “Creative City”⁵⁸⁰ appeared in the field of urban regeneration. These approaches question the value of traditional master planning, and are aimed at a more experiential understanding of urban places, in which the “lived” experience of places

⁵⁷⁸ This section is based on a number of earlier publications on the theme of urban regeneration in architectural reviews Maja, OASE and de Architect, as well as a study on alternative politics in urban innovation developed together with Panu Lehtovuori.

Klaske Havik “Strength and Vulnerability. Creativity at former industrial sites in the Netherlands” in: *MAJA Estonian Architectural Review*, Tallinn: Kirjastus Maja OÜ, 2-2005 (44), pp. 54-61; Klaske Havik, “Monotony and diversity along the banks of the IJ” in: In Pnina Avidar, Klaske Havik, and David Mulder (eds) *OASE 73 Gentrification. Flows and Counterflows*, NAi Publishers Rotterdam 2007, pp. 129-136; Panu Lehtovuori and Klaske Havik, “Alternative Politics in Urban Innovation”, in: Lily Kong and Justin O’Connor (eds.), *Creative Economies Creative Cities: Asian-European Perspectives*, Springer 2009, pp. 207-228

⁵⁷⁹ See for a number of cases of bottom-up developments of former industrial sites across Europe from the early 1990’s; Peti Buchel and Bert Hogervorst, *The Turning Tide. The user’s role in the redevelopment of harbour buildings in North-West Europe*, De Appelbloesem Pers, Amsterdam 1997. See also: *Factory Smoke*, Quaderns d’arquitectura i urbanisme #230, Barcelona 2001.

⁵⁸⁰ For a discussion on these concepts see also: Panu Lehtovuori and Klaske Havik, “Alternative Politics in Urban Innovation”, in: Lily Kong and Justin O’Connor (eds.), *Creative Economies Creative Cities: Asian-European Perspectives*, Springer 2009, pp. 207-228

plays a role. Urban innovation is a term used by Peter Hall, who stated that the city is a necessary breeding ground for all sorts of innovation as well as for economic and social change.⁵⁸¹ The notion of Temporary Use is seen by the Urban Catalyst Research group⁵⁸² as a neglected resource of urban planning and development. Instead of focusing on the permanent and visible, the Urban Catalyst’s project emphasized the ephemeral, stating that temporary uses and users do have positive economic and social effects on places in the city. Incubator policy is a political device developed in a number of Dutch cities⁵⁸³ to encourage creative groups to use ‘marginal’ sites as creative breeding places. The Creative City debate can be seen as one of the approaches born from the urban innovation discourse, and was initiated in the 1990s by among others Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini,⁵⁸⁴ while Richard Florida helped to raise a great awareness of the innovative potential of the so-called “creative class”.⁵⁸⁵ The transition from a production-oriented to a concept-oriented society is seen in this discussion as a significant societal transformation that strongly influences the way in which we relate to the city and the built environment. The observation of Creative City thinkers, as simple as it is far-reaching, is that people, and more specifically the creativity of the urban populace, are the most valuable resource for urban development: “Cities have one crucial resource – their people. Human cleverness, desires, motivations, imagination and creativity are replacing location, natural resources and market access as urban resources.”⁵⁸⁶ This means that the relation between people and the environment they live and work in, in other words, lived and social aspects of places acquires a

⁵⁸¹ Peter Hall, *Cities in Civilisation. Culture, Innovation and Urban Order*, Weidenfeld, London 1998.

⁵⁸² This research group was initiated by the Technische Universität Berlin and funded by the European Union focussing on the temporary uses of residual urban areas in five European cities, Naples, Vienna, Amsterdam, Berlin and Helsinki Lehtovuori, Panu, Hentilä, Helka-Liisa, and Christer Bengs. *Temporary uses. The forgotten resource of urban planning* Espoo: Publications in the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, 2003. See also: Florian Haydnand Robert Temel (Eds.), *Temporary Urban Spaces. Concepts for the Use of City Spaces*, Birkhäuser, Basel 2006

⁵⁸³ See for example www.broedplaatsamsterdam.nl, see also Klaske Havik, “Monotony and Diversity along the Banks of the IJ”, in *OASE73, Gentrification, Flows and Counter-Flows*, Pnina Avidar, Klaske Havik et. al. (eds.), NAi Publishers, Rotterdam 2007, pp. 129-137

⁵⁸⁴ Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini, *The Creative City*, Demos, London 1995 and Charles Landry, *The Creative City -A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, Earthskin, London 2000;

see also: Richard Florida, *The Rise of Creative Class: And How It’s transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, New York 2002; Jan Verwijnen and Panu Lehtovuori (eds.), *Creative Cities Cultural Industries, Urban Development and the Information Society*, UIAH publishers, Helsinki 1996; Simon Franke and Evert Verhagen (eds.), *Reflect #05, Creativiteit en de stad - hoe de creatieve economie de stad verandert*, NAi Publishers, Rotterdam 2005

⁵⁸⁵ Richard Florida introduced the concept of the “Creative Class”. By using the word “class” Florida suggests that a significant social revolution is involved. After all, it was the terminology Marx used to describe a revolution in thinking about the city, society and economics. Perhaps this powerful language is why Florida’s work is so successful. The danger in his popularity and of his all-too inclusive definition of who belongs to the creative class, however, is that the terminology is applied too superficially. Richard Florida, *The Rise of Creative Class: And How It’s transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, New York 2002

⁵⁸⁶ Charles Landry, *The Creative City -A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, London 2000, pp xiii

far more important position in the debate about the city. Of increasing significance to any city is how the public space is experienced, how everyday occurrences and special events find their place within the city and how the so-called creative class can commit to a city.⁵⁸⁷

These approaches to urban regeneration have in common their focus on site-specificity, user perspectives and changeability in development processes. First, the meaning of place shifts from mere “pragmatic” location, with a focus on availability of material, labour and infrastructure, to a focus on the experience and appropriation of place. Since the economy of the city is no longer directly related to industrial modes of production, factors such as industry, infrastructure and employment make way for ‘softer’ factors such as social-spatial practices, atmosphere, diversity and the quality of public space. Second, the role of local actors such as users, inhabitants and other stakeholders becomes crucial in urban regeneration processes – precisely because they are the ones who live, appropriate and develop their environment. Therefore, existing and new techniques of participatory planning have gained a renewed interest in urban planning. New business models combining private and public parties in sharing responsibility for development processes are finding their way into urban practice. Third, designers, politicians and planners dealing with urban regeneration processes have to find ways to address indeterminacy. Because of the increasing mobility of people and labour, the urban master plan can no longer be seen as something “stable”. New techniques and approaches have to be developed that address these uncertainties in a productive way. In current urban projects, especially in regeneration projects of industrial sites, alternative approaches thus appear in which the experience of the public realm, the user’s perspective and the imagination of the uncertain are taken into account – precisely the three aspects that I have attempted to discuss in this work.

5.3.3 THE VIEW: URBAN LITERACY

The above mentioned approaches to urban regeneration, however, predominantly focus on policies and procedures, rather than offering clues for spatial *design* disciplines. The knowledge of such urban regeneration approaches should therefore be combined with knowledge and instruments concerning urban and architectural design, which specifically deal with the important urban issues such as place experience, use and imagination. Such spatial tools and knowledge, addressing the experience and appropriation of place, involving local actors such as users, inhabitants and other stakeholders, and taking into account the changeability of uses and

⁵⁸⁷ Richard Florida, *The Rise of Creative Class: And How It’s transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, New York 2002

processes in urban development, all take part in what I have called, after Charles Landry, urban literacy.

As discussed at the departure of this work, urban literacy was proposed by Landry as a possible tool in a broad interdisciplinary approach to urbanism.⁵⁸⁸ The design of a city, in Landry’s view, is a complex activity involving several different perspectives. He pleads for more attention to experiencing and understanding the city – and for responding to it accordingly. This requires a broader set of instruments, beyond urban planning and architecture. “Every crevice in the city had a hidden story or undiscovered potential that could be re-used for a positive urban purpose,” Landry concluded once he recognized creativity as a resource for urban development.⁵⁸⁹ Precisely this connection to stories offers an interesting and productive view on urban innovation. In his argument for a more inclusive understanding of urbanism, Landry thus introduces the concept of *urban literacy* as a way of reading and understanding cities. He defines urban literacy as “the ability and skill to ‘read’ the city and understand how cities work”.⁵⁹⁰ Urban literacy, as a kind of language that could involve the “reading” of the city by a number of literary tools, such as the use of literary characters or evocative descriptions regarding the senses, can be seen as a way to take into account such site-specific potential. Urban literacy, as coined by Charles Landry in the Creative City discourse, thus offers a new perspective for the urgent task of architects and urban planners to design the contemporary public realm.

While Landry has brought up the term as a possible perspective, he did not further explore how it is embedded in spatial theory and how it could be operational in urban and architectural practice. As Landry, in the end of his book, explicitly invited “others to take its themes forward and explore issues not fully addressed”,⁵⁹¹ my efforts to formulate three elaborations of urban literacy can be seen as such. In my view, urban literacy provides a way to include the lived experience, the user’s perspective and the imagination of alternative futures in current tasks of urban regeneration, by means of literary techniques in spatial research and design. Descriptions of places and the analysis of existing narratives are used to investigate the creative potential of such locations, while scriptive techniques, such as evocative description, narrative and scenario offer tools for design. This approach makes it possible to include the experiential aspects of place and to use local sources for urban cultural production. While the approach is grounded in spatial theory, it offers practical tools for design and analysis, appropriate for the contemporary questions of urban regeneration. This work thus elaborates

⁵⁸⁸ Charles Landry, *The Creative City- a toolkit for urban innovators*, Comedia / Earthscan, London 2000, , p 246-247. See for a more detailed discussion of Landry’s definition the first chapter of this work: Departure.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibidem, p. 7

⁵⁹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 246-247

⁵⁹¹ Ibidem, p. 257

the concept of urban literacy, specifying in which ways it indeed offers another dimension in questions of place making. Together, the three notions description, transcription and prescription provide a new and productive perspective on urban regeneration. By using this threefold literary bridge, it becomes possible not only to read the lived experience of place, but also to actively write it through architectural and urban practice.

Epilogue

LJUBLJANA, 1921

Home again. In peace. After more than thirty years in the rush of the metropolis, I have left Vienna and my master Otto Wagner, I have left Prague and the greatness of the city. I was in the centre of European architecture, I took part in the development of new ideas for a modern architecture, for the cities of the twentieth century, I could build in stone and words. Nevertheless, I came back. I am too silent to be in the foreground. I came back to live a modest life, to again inhabit the town in which I am rooted, that I know so well that it inhabits me. My home is a small house, behind the church of Trnovo. Every day, I walk the path that I paved with red stones, around the corner, and I enter the church through its heavy front door. It is always pleasantly cold in here, and I like to take place on the long wooden bench with the red pillow seating. My eyes follow the slender curve in the ceiling, and meet the light above. I sit in silence. When leaving the church, I find myself in front of the small stream Gradaščica. It comes from the mountain, it winds through the villages and almost touches my house before meeting the Ljubljanica River, just down the road. On Sunday mornings I follow the Gradaščica upstream for a while, then I cross the village of Rožna and take the steep path, with its steps grown from tree trunks, to the Rožnik church on the hill. After the service I descend the other way, through the forest and Tivoli Park, passing the palace, down to the city where I meet my sister at the river for our Sunday lunch. Walking, I am the reader of my town, I take the same routes over and over: the straight line from home to the city centre, or the route following the stream and then the river, a bit longer because of its curves, and also because I stop more often to look at the water below, to smell the wet stones and hear the wind playing in the trees. Today, I cross the stream and walk towards the city centre. Emona Street, the small houses, trees, then I cross the bigger Zois Street that leads down to the Ljubljanica on my right hand side. In the distance, across the river, I can see the church of St Jacobski, and the Castle hill. Continuing my way, I pass old Roman walls. Porous stone, in shades of grey, yellow and brown. The small square of the French Revolution, an awkward intersection of minor streets, as if the street hesitates, then bends, slightly, and continues. Then Vega Street, lined by trees and more urban buildings, standing a bit higher and a few metres back from the street because of the old remnants. I reach Congress Square. Its size is urban, its church sits on a corner, which I like: it splits the space in two, as it were: in front of the church the urban plane, sloping almost unnoticeably down to the river, only blocked by the last row of buildings – the Philharmonic Hall. Next to this the other half, a park. Maybe I should accentuate this – make the part in front of the church more monumental, the park more park-like. Plane trees rather than chestnuts, the paths a star-shape, maybe a fountain . . . In the tavern I meet my old friend from Vienna, who works at the municipality. We drink a glass of red wine and we smoke, silently. Then I make a sketch and show him the associations I had during my walk: a new layout for Congress Square, and some small adjustments along the route.

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That is what I do, I mark the points on my routes, I make connections visible, but I do not unveil the mask entirely. My game is to discover fragments and to bring them to life, slowly, one by one: a pavement, a monument for a poet, a lamp pole, a line of trees, a pyramid. My sources are limited but I use what I can find, what is under my feet, I pulverize stones, I pour concrete, I use what grows, the trees, I use what is left over from demolished houses, columns and windows and piping. I make the scenes, separately, and then they begin to communicate: they speak, they speak to people, they tell them how to walk this city, how to use it, where to go and where to sit, where to honour their ancestors, the musicians and poets of this town, where to meet and talk. All of a sudden, one fragment leads to another – I tie them together to form a story, more stories, uncountable stories as all the routes intersect and new combinations can be made. Yes, I believe it is like this, I do not make the story, I make its parts, and provide the means for the people to make their stories. From the intersection of Zois Street and Emona Street I have paved the sidewalks, I planted trees to accompany the walk down to the river. From there to Jacobski Square across the river, it needed verticality: trees, slim poplar trees to line up with the church. And the river, the river itself, I give it guidance: where to flow, where to rest, where to be crossed, where to be looked at. I tame it with sluices, and I cherish it in the city. And then I make it all come together at the three bridges. In fact, I built only two of them, two footbridges on both sides of the old bridge that had become too small. Regarding the old bridge, I simply gave it new railings and lamp poles corresponding to the new bridges on its sides. It was a simple solution, but it fit my purpose. The bridge could, in this way, become more than a bridge: through its width and spatial complexity, the triple bridge is an urban place in itself, the paths with different directions make people aware of their position and trajectory, and those of others. The space I have left in between the bridges allows the river to be crossed without losing contact with the water. In between, in the niches on the lower banks, I have planted some poplar trees. From both sides of the river, only their leaves can be seen, while from the bridge the small lawn in which they are rooted becomes visible. Also, I included the lower banks in this interplay: stairs lead down from the footbridges to a public toilet or to a restaurant. I made the lower bank a place to sit, next to the bridge, under it, part of it, but at a distance. The bridge is simultaneously water and land, it separates and connects, defining the two sides of the river as different entities, while bringing them together. Neither a square nor a building, this place is both a passage and a centre. The triple bridge is now the very core of the city, where all routes intersect.

I am not making a new city, I am fulfilling the city that has in potential always been, and that has waited for me, its architect, to be realized in its full glory. From my modern masters I have learned about monumentality, about tabula rasa and breaking with the past. I had to learn these things in order to forget them consciously, for in Ljubljana my task is different. I was born in this town and I will die here for that it becomes, for that it becomes itself. No longer a sleeping provincial town, but the city it has always wanted to be, crowned by its castle, its streets radiant sunbeams springing off from the centre, the river its vital vein. I am the writer of this city, I write in stones and trees, I write the paths under people's feet, I write the course of the river, I write in repetition. My handwriting repeats itself in the city, in different disguises: in the pyramids and spheres at bridges and street corners, silently referring to one another, in the pavement of niches and benches, in subtle additions to buildings, in the replacement of old buildings by new ones, expressing the spirit of the true Ljubljana. I have erected a building for wisdom in the city, the National and University Library. Its façade in stone and brick, alive in its plasticity, can be seen from the Castle hill, and even when seen from there its rhythm seems to speak with the million voices of its erudite content. I have given it doors in heavy copper, with noble horse heads as handshakes. Inside, the dark tone of respect. Black marble, big columns, a monumental staircase leading in one long flight to the reading room, where the light is. I made the reading room high and pleasant, I used wooden panelling for the walls, the floor and the ceiling, I designed wooden tables on marble columns, and modern industrial lamps to enlighten the students on their path to knowledge. I have envisioned a plan for a whole new university, at the edge of Tivoli Park. How great it would be, such a centre of knowledge and innovation embedded in the city's most prominent park, a dialogue between the old power of the palace and the modern power of knowledge . . . So far, the municipality has not approved my plan, but I continue to take steps towards it: I have already redesigned the axis from Tivoli Palace to the city, widening the path, placing trees and lamp poles along it. I even took care of the dead of the city, for that they, too, will rest in the spirit of Ljubljana. I designed the gates to the Žale cemetery, I made the chapels, the memorial monuments, the tombstones for the dead. My urban project, my life work, is timeless: there is no distinction between future and past, between the living and the dead. I am neither a modernist nor a classicist, I observe and craft the city in all its dimensions, I care for its details and its urban whole, I make it speak, I make it come alive by its intersecting narratives, I imagine and I realize this city, my city, Ljubljana.⁵⁹²

592 Final note. For Plečnik's story, I have made use of Peter Krečič, *Plečnik. The Complete Works*, Academy Editions / Ernst&Sohn, London 1993, specifically the chapter "Urban Interventions", pp. 109-126. For my walks in Ljubljana and for information about Plečnik's life, the guide of Andrej Hausky, Janez Koželj, *Jože Plečnik in Ljubljana and Slovenia*, Cankarjeva založba, Ljubljana, 2007, has been helpful, as well as the Ljubljana Architectural Museum located in his former house.

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This research project is informed by a wide range of references, from different fields. The fruitful exchange between the approaches of the various disciplines is one of the crucial arguments of this work. I have therefore chosen to present all references together, instead of making separate lists for literary works, architecture theory and works in other theoretical fields.

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Nederlandse samenvatting

Stedelijk alfabetisme. Een scriptieve benadering van de ervaring, het gebruik en de verbeelding van plekken.

Dit onderzoeksproject bespreekt hoe literatuur waardevolle inzichten biedt die ons in staat stellen bewust te worden van de manier waarop mensen plekken beleven, gebruiken en verbeelden. Mijn zoektocht naar het formuleren van een literaire benadering van architectuur en de stad komt voort uit een kritiek op het gebrek aan aandacht voor deze aspecten en op de soms oppervlakkige beeld-gerichte tendens binnen het architectonisch en stedenbouwkundige debat. Ik betoog dat vandaag de dag een integrale benadering die deze ervaringsaspecten van architectuur serieus in beschouwing neemt een dringende noodzaak is voor architecten en stedenbouwers. Op zoek naar een meer genuanceerd perspectief dat de "geleefde ervaring" binnen het architectuurdebat zou kunnen brengen en de ervaring van de gebruiker als verwaarloosde bron van stedelijke en architectonische kennis zou waarderen, kwam ik terecht bij de literatuur. In dit werk betoog ik dat Henri Lefebvre's begrip van "geleefde ruimte", ruimte dus die ervaren en "geleefd" is door gebruikers en die herinneringen en verbeeldingen oproept, precies het soort ruimte is dat we in literaire teksten tegenkomen. In hun evocatieve beschrijvingen van plekken en ruimtes lijken schrijvers, meer dan de meeste architecten of architectuurtheoretici, getalenteerd te zijn architectuur te "lezen" op verschillende niveaus, en om de verhouding tussen mensen en hun leefomgeving zeer accuraat en met oog voor detail te beschrijven. De hypothese van dit werk is dat als literatuur zulke inzichten in architectuur kan bieden, een literaire benadering, die gebruik maakt van instrumenten uit de literatuur, ook denkbaar is binnen het domein van onderzoek en ontwerp van stad en architectuur.

In literaire teksten is er sprake van een zekere ambivalentie ten aanzien van subjectiviteit en objectiviteit, schrijver en lezer, fictie en realiteit. In dit werk stel ik voor dat deze ambiguïteit, die wellicht op het eerste gezicht een complicerende factor lijkt om architectuur met literaire middelen te beschouwen, te zien is als kracht. De blik van de literaire schrijver stelt ons in staat om tussen deze schijnbare tegenstellingen heen en weer te bewegen, daarmee illustreren dat de geleefde ervaring van architectuur in feite juist draait om het samengaan ervan. Zoekend naar een brug die de geleefde ervaring een nieuwe rol kan geven in het stedelijk en architectonisch onderzoek en praktijk, onderzocht ik daarom de mogelijkheid om van deze brug een literaire te maken. Om de verschillende perspectieven die een literaire benadering te bieden heeft aan de orde te stellen, heb ik een drieluik

gemaakt van aan elkaar gerelateerde concepten: descriptie, transcriptie en prescriptie. De drie concepten zijn elk gebaseerd op vaardigheden van literaire schrijvers, die ik vervolgens naar het domein van de architectuur en stedenbouw heb getracht te vertalen.

Het hoofdstuk Descriptie richt zich op de evocatieve beschrijving van de ervaring van stad en architectuur, en daarmee op de vaardigheid om sferen, materialen en details zorgvuldig te observeren en te beschrijven met meer zintuigen dan alleen het visuele. Literaire beschrijvingen van ruimtes geven blijk van een sensitiviteit jegens zulke thema's, zoals ik in dit hoofdstuk toon aan de hand van een aantal fragmenten uit romans en poëzie. Als theoretische component van dit hoofdstuk wordt de perceptie van architectuur belicht, en daarmee het spanningsveld tussen subject en object. Lefebvre's begrip van geleefde ervaring komt hierbij aan de orde, evenals de fenomenologische stroming in de filosofie die ingaat op de zintuigelijke perceptie, en het begrip van poëtische ontvankelijkheid zoals omschreven door Gaston Bachelard. Het werk van architect Steven Holl wordt besproken als voorbeeld van een descriptieve benadering.

Transcriptie brengt de sociale dimensie van stad en architectuur naar voren, aan de hand van de wisselwerking tussen lezer en schrijver- of, in de architectuur, tussen ontwerper en gebruiker. Literaire fragmenten tonen de onlosmakelijke relatie tussen ruimte en gebruik, terwijl literaire praktijken die bewust experimenteren met de wisselwerking tussen lezer en schrijver ook aan de orde komen. Het theoretische betoog in dit hoofdstuk legt een verband tussen het literaire begrip narratief en de sociale dimensie van architectonische en stedelijke ruimte. Auteurs zoals Michel de Certeau, Richard Sennett en Paul Ricoeur bieden hier de belangrijke theoretische posities. De ontwerp-instrumenten die voortkomen uit deze benadering omvatten onder meer het gebruik van het narratief of verhaal en literaire personages. De positie van Bernard Tschumi als een architect die zich intensief met deze onderwerpen heeft beziggehouden, wordt in dit hoofdstuk naar voren gebracht.

Prescriptie, tenslotte, belicht de positie van de architect die per definitie ontwerpt voor een onbekende toekomst en die daarom balanceert tussen realiteit en fictie. In literatuur gaat de constructie van nieuwe werelden vaak gepaard met een kritiek op het bestaande. Ook in de architectuur kan met een ontwerp een kritische positie worden ingenomen. Net als literaire schrijvers construeren ook architecten een imaginaire toekomstige situatie waarin hun ontwerpen plaats hebben. Dit hoofdstuk bespreekt de creatieve balans tussen realiteit en verbeelding, eerst door een aantal literaire voorbeelden te noemen waarbij verbeelding een cruciale rol speelt en vervolgens door enkele theoretische concepten nader te belichten. Bakthin's idee van de chronotoop als temporele en ruimtelijke constructie waarbinnen schrijvers hun wereldbeeld construeren is daar een van, evenals het begrip scena-

rio. Het werk van Rem Koolhaas wordt in dit hoofdstuk in beeld gebracht als prescriptieve benadering van architectuur.

Samen vormen de drie termen descriptie, transcriptie en prescriptie een raamwerk waarmee ervaring, gebruik en verbeelding van plekken aan de orde kunnen worden gesteld, en waarmee instrumenten worden ontwikkeld voor ruimtelijk onderzoek en ontwerp. Elk van de drie takken van deze literaire brug raakt aan een ander theoretisch veld en bespreekt andere voorbeelden uit de ontwerp praktijk. De drie takken van de brug leiden weliswaar gezamenlijk tot dezelfde ruimte van "stedelijk alfabetisme", maar bieden tegelijkertijd de mogelijkheid om verschillende routes te kiezen. Door deze literaire benadering te gebruiken, is het wellicht mogelijk om geleefde ruimte niet alleen te lezen, maar ook te "schrijven" door middel van het architectonisch en stedenbouwkundig ontwerp.

Curriculum vitae

Klaske Maria Havik was born on October 13th, 1975, in Haren, the Netherlands. She attended the Praedinius Gymnasium in Groningen, and started her studies in architecture at Delft University of Technology in 1993. In 1996-1997, she also studied literary writing at Schrijversvakschool 't Colofon in Amsterdam. She studied at the Department of Architecture of Helsinki University of Technology in Finland in 1998. After her graduation in Delft in 2000, with a landscape and architectural design for the Helsinki waterfront (nominated for Archiprix), she has worked for several years as an editor for the Dutch architectural review *de Architect*. As an architect, she has been involved in architectural design projects, with architecture studios *de Ruimte* and *qenep*. These projects often dealt with the theme of urban regeneration, such as the development of the former ship-wharf NDSM in Amsterdam into a cultural breeding place.

After teaching courses in architectural theory and writing as a guest lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture in Delft, Klaske Havik became assistant professor in 2004. Within the section Architecture and Modernity, she has taught master courses in architecture theory, and tutored the graduation studios *Border Conditions* and *Public Realm*. She initiated the elective master 2 course *City&Literature*, which introduces literary instruments to students of architecture. She co-organized the seminar series 'Architectural Positions' in 2007, and co-edited the anthology *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere*, SUN Publishers 2009. She has also lectured at other schools of architecture in Europe, including Helsinki University of Technology in Finland, the Faculty of Architecture in Skopje, Macedonia and the EKA School of Architecture in Tallinn, Estonia.

Klaske Havik writes regularly for architecture magazines in the Netherlands and Nordic countries and is editor of the Dutch-Belgian architecture journal *OASE*. Her writing is not limited to architecture: since 1999, she has presented her poems at a number of literary events in the Netherlands, such as the Poetry International Festival in Rotterdam (2002). Poems of her hand have been published in a number of Dutch poetry collections.

