The Valley
The Ground of Earthly Delights

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Key Concepts

Planning - Sectioning,
Sector – Block - Component,
Ground - Object,
Leisure Program
My graduation project is located in the valley of Luxembourg City. During the designing of this project, Constant Nieuwenhuys’s New Babylon played a crucial role for its similarities with the valley in the city.
Firstly, they both stretch all over the city, resulting in a sort of skeleton of the city for its holism. New Babylon is suspended above the already-existent ground while the valley, in a perspective, is carved into the plateaus.

Secondly, the human activities inside are quite alike. New Babylon is known for its ludic characteristics which are distinct from normal utilitarian modernism buildings while the valley in Luxembourg, which is characterized by its leisure activities, is distinct from the plateaus which is characterized by its bureaucratic building, as a sign of utilitarianism.

Thirdly, the last but the most important, New Babylon and the valley, which has been and is to be transformed artificially, share structural similarities, both in terms of planning and sectioning. Also, I take the sector which is a basic unit in New Babylon as a prototype to illustrate Planning and Sectioning as a way of re-depicting the valley.

![Constant’s initial Planning and Sectioning of New Babylon](image-url)
Planning: Sector – Block - Component

City: Sectors Connected

Sector: Blocks Juxtaposed (Yellow Sector)
The sector is the basic unit of New Babylon. It has its external and internal organization. Externally, one sector is connected to another, resulting in these chains of sectors, resembling the different segments of the valley. Internally, one sector is constituted by several blocks. Constant’s yellow sector is taken as an example. In Yellow Sector, those different blocks stand with their own independent structures and therefore complete geometric contours. The relationship of the sector to the blocks resembles that of the set to the elements, in mathematics. A Block is constituted by components as the texture within a contour. Components could be specified into structure and furniture. In the abstract planning of the valley, it is obvious that the whole valley is symmetrically divided into 7 segments, namely the angular segment in the middle, which is 4, the in-between segments, 3 and 5, the turning segments, 2 and 6, and the stretching segments, 1 and 7. If we think of the whole valley as New Babylon, a chain of sectors, the different segments one after another would be the sectors and the strip buildings which are placed paralleled with the longitudinal direction in the valley would be recognized as the blocks, edge blocks, which are transformed for the adaption of the shape of the sectors.
The 7 Sectors in the Valley
Sectioning: Ground – Object

We may say, Planning is the rational disposition of blocks inside the sector, which is a rational process. Sectioning, however, is the creation of exceptions. It is the interacting game between the ground (the basement) and the object (the roof, or the building), which are initially two parallel layers in a section. From the sectioning between New Babylon and the valley, we could recognize the valley as a sort of reversed New Babylon. The slaps, the horizontal components in New Babylon are reversed as the grounds in the valley while the hollow columns as load-bearing structure, the vertical components in New Babylon are reversed as the objects in the valley. Apparently, a type of block, is defined by the relationship between its objects and ground.
The Interaction between Planning and Sectioning 2

To conclude, we may say, the valley, in a way, is reconstructed in our mind by Planning and Sectioning. These two are not methods for they are not there for analysis. However, they are essential understanding of the valley. Therefore, they are not the epistemology, but the ontology. Planning, as a rational way of thinking, plays as the catalog of Sectioning. I have made a 2.5D model to show the integration of Planning and Sectioning. Sectioning, however, is a collection of exceptions, which are breakthroughs of normal positioning of the ground and the object.
The Valley Sector

As mentioned above, the valley could be regarded as the series connection of 7 segments. Among these segments, the 2 turning sectors stand out because they are at the intersection points of different plateaus. I picked up the north one as my site for its accommodating more diverse relations, the river, the red bridge, the railway, the elevator, the train station, the telphers, the fortification and the buildings of European Union on Kirchberg. On the contrary, the south one is almost blank.

The valley in this north turning sector provides an alternative route for pedestrians to reach Kirchberg across the valley besides the red bridge. Compared to the red bridge, the route in the valley is more attractive for the desire of drifting. It is a field for wandering instead of a road leading one-way towards someplace.

Seeing from the whole map of Luxembourg City, we could see that the site, the valley sector is a natural extension of the green belt which surrounds the city. Also, it connects the elevator, which leads people down from the plateau, with the station, which could lead people up towards Kirchberg, by the telphers. The red bridge is for cars while the valley sector is for wandering pedestrians.

Therefore, if we simplify the walking path, we get this,
Sector 1 : green belt (staying)
Node 1  :  the elevator (moving)
Sector 2 : the public settlement (staying)
Node 2: fortification bridge (moving)
Sector 3: the valley sector (staying)
Node 3: the station/telphers (moving)
Sector 4: Kirchberg (staying)
In this sequence, we recognize the rhythm, the repetition of staying-moving. So, the mission of the valley sector would be to provide a place for staying, which calls for the set-up of a series of promising programs.

Besides, in terms of sectioning, the edge blocks have been roughly defined by the relationships of the ground and the objects. In this valley sector, there would be 3,
1 retaining walls, where the slopes meet the valley
2 basements, where the main parts of the valley sit
3 river banks, where the slopes meet the river
Dystopian Leisure Space

Drawing 1 and Model 1
Drawing 2 and Model 2
During the conceptual designing, I juxtaposed several different types of edge blocks to depict a complete sector (Drawing 1 and Model 1). Also, I explore the potential of each one separately (Drawing 2 and Model 2). Additionally, I specify different interactions between the ground and the objects, which define different blocks (Drawing 3 and Model 3). All these works have paved the route towards programs.
2 Leisure Programs: The Ground of Earthly Delights

Compared to the plateaus above, which are quite open in the air, the valley is somehow enclosed. In this way, it is an exception independent from the space around, as New Babylon being suspended above the natural ground. In terms of program, the plateaus are bureaucratic sectors while the valley is a ludic sector.

That is why I find The Garden of Earthly Delights, Hieronymus Bosch’s well-known triptych as a crucial reference. They are both enclosed space with a flat ground in the middle, a bright slope and a dark slope at both sides, and a river in the middle of the flat area, showing a great potential of accommodating extremely diverse leisure programs which are directly defined by the people’s activities.

I hope that planning and sectioning of blocks could imply a series of programs according to their formal essence. In this way, the programs are not isolated from the forms. Simultaneously, the programs should follow the essence of leisure which makes the valley distinctive from the plateaus.
In Patrick Geddes’s *Valley Section*, he showed the correspondences of topographies and professions. In my drawing, *New Valley Section*, different blocks which are somehow the abstraction of several specific sites in the original valley, are defined by the interactions of the ground and the objects, but at the same time they have their indication for programs. For instance, the building buried into the flat ground may call for the market because the market usually appears with a free plan with even lattice of columns inside. With these blocks as prototypes, I specified several prototypes below, which are the combination of forms and programs,

The market, with columns, reference: Palazzo della Ragione
The baths, with concrete walls, reference: Vals Thermal
The hotel, with concrete walls, reference: Tbilisi Roads Ministry Building
The library, with concrete walls, reference: Educatorium
The sports field, with concrete slabs, reference: Museum of Ocean and Surf

There are three important changes in the evolution modification of the project,
1 several separated blocks become unified into one sector,
2 the change of the sector: the original cross sector becomes longitudinal sector,
3 the change of the blocks: the blocks are evolved into edge blocks, to fit in the strip-shaped valley sector.

The planning-sectioning and leisure programs of the final valley sector
1 The market : plant exchanging
2 The institute : seed library
3 The greenhouse : collective production
4 The private production field
5 The extreme sports field
6 The baths
7 The multi-functional hall
8 The tea houses & bar
9 The hotel
10 The ramps (a part of the infrastructure)

The shadow of the red bridge is a frontier of bright/dark programs, or public/private programs. This also fits in the original distribution of the site. There are public houses in the south and residential houses in the north. Additionally, in terms of sectioning, all those blocks could be classified into three types, the retaining walls, which are between the slope and the ground, basements, which are on the valley ground, river banks, which are between the ground and the river. They are all edge blocks and are in some way cutting-edge. Together they constitute the so-called Valley Sector, which is a natural sequel of Shutter Realm.