



ON MAKING VANCOUVER
Showroom Symposium 2008

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Acknowledgements

Showroom is

Curators: Kristina Lee Podesva + Inge Roecker

Symposium Organizer: Patrick Foong Chan

Symposium Speakers: Yin-Lun Chan, Emily Fedoruk, Jon Frantz, Penny Gurstein, Jessica Hallenbeck, Am Johal, Vanessa Kwan, Kathy Mezei, Howard Rotberg, Maged Senbel, Alex Witko + Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe

Artists: Michelle Allard, Marianne Bos, Paul de Guzman, Vanessa Kwan, Gwenessa Lam, Heidi Nagtegaal, Alex Pensato + Ryan Peter

Film Screenings: Jordan Strom

Exhibition Dates: June 6 – July 12, 2008

Opening Reception: Friday, June 6, 8 pm

Symposium: Saturday, June 7, 10 to 6:30 pm

Doors open at 9:45 am

Centre A Gallery Hours:

Tuesday - Saturday 11:00 - 18:00

Sunday-Monday closed

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Preamble

What is "making Vancouver"? The word 'making' indicates that Vancouver is not yet made and that its spatial-conceptual and geographical boundaries are not settled. Likewise its communities are always coming and changing, for the city's physical form conditions communities and vice versa. This symposium addresses the various forces that constitute the continuous making of Vancouver. Today's papers will address the limits and potentials of these forces and offer alternatives to the current imagination and manifestation of Vancouver City, particularly its recent condominium developments around Chinatown, Yale Town and Coal Harbour. However, alternatives are not mere protests. The speakers do not position themselves outside of the 'system'; rather they investigate ways in which the system or systems that make Vancouver can be diversified. Alternatives are about diversification, expanding potentials rather than insisting on an idealised city. In other words, one may suggest that the alternatives offered are not dogmatic; they are offered to inspire new modes of engagement with the city.

This symposium is part of an installation titled *Showroom* that was co-initiated by architect Inge Roecker and artist Kristina Lee Podesva. *Showroom* mimics the standard showroom one encounters in the real estate business. What *Showroom* does is to heighten the potentials for communication within the built environment. Physically situated within *Showroom* this symposium serves as a platform for artists, academics and designers to potentially think and act together on how Vancouver can have more 'makings'. The symposium and the city itself are interdisciplinary in form. The various disciplines represented here today as well as in the city's reality bring about constitutive spatial, conceptual, material, visual, textual, corporeal, etc forces that contribute to the making and remaking of Vancouver.*

All the presentations today are interdisciplinary in form as well. The disciplines of visual art, literature, architecture, planning and landscape architecture are in their current mode of practice interdisciplinary. The use of philosophy, particularly German and French lines, in spatial design disciplines is not new. And it is not just designers who use philosophy: Frederic Jameson used Frank Gehry's Santa Monica House to discuss a line of political philosophy that challenges easily representable identities; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari used the figure of the city to expand their notion of deterritorialisation of both subject and

space. In turn, designers have in the last two decades borrowed Deleuze and Guattari's work to extend their research. At the same time artists have been using spatial concepts developed in urban theory to inform their work, conversely, designers use art theory and cultural theory to elaborate their design activities. Literary writers and scholars have used architectural metaphors and descriptions to produce more complex literary subjects and places.

It is because of the abovementioned facts that makes dividing today's presenters into 'sessions' hard. We, the organisers, have decided on three sessions that hone in on different focuses within this indefinable thing that is urban theory and urbanity. Yet, keeping in mind, these three sessions are only starting points for further interdisciplinary adventures in rethinking Vancouver's making.

Patrick Foong Chan
22nd May 2008
Vancouver

* See attached essay by Pat Chan on the relation between interdisciplinarity and coming communities.

Schedule

9.75	Morning Tea + Snacks
10.5	Yin-Lun Chan <i>Layering Upon Vancouver's Cultural Landscape</i>
11	Alex Witko <i>To Practice Bricolage: Tapping a Culture of Consumption for Creative Production</i>
11.5	Maged Senbel + Sharif Senbel <i>Canadian Islamic Regionalism</i>
12	Roundtable Discussion
12.5	Lunch (Catered)
13.5	Am Johal <i>The Bureaucratic Delegitimation of Vancouver's Civil Society</i>
14	Penny Gurstein + Howard Roberg <i>Vancouverism: A Values-Based Analysis of Vancouver's Urbanism</i>
14.5	Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe <i>Greening or Greenwash: Marketing Vancouverism</i>
15	Roundtable Discussion
15.5	Afternoon Tea + Snacks
16	Kathy Mszel <i>Domestic Rights: A View from the Interior</i>
16.5	Jonathan Framiz + Jessica Hallenbeck <i>A Tale of Two Films: Video and the Rights to Participation, Appropriation, and Communication</i>
17	Emily Fedaruk <i>showcases</i>
17.5	Vanessa Kwan <i>The Storm and the Fall</i>
18	Roundtable Discussion

Critical Alterities in Vancouver Session 1

Here presenters discuss the ideology, policies and economics that resulted in what architects and planners around the world call the "Vancouver Model". Here the limits and potentials of the Vancouver Model will be questioned, what are its impacts on housing, land-use, heritage, culture and ultimately civility?

Place and Civility in the Vancouver Model Session 2

What is alterity? It is easy to simply state the opposite. But the alternative may be that which is not easily describable. It may challenge what is conventionally considered the 'other'. In this session, presenters use their own work to address how religion, sustainability and identity can form different relationships with the larger landscape that is Vancouver. These different relationships beget the question of Vancouver's regional-ity. How does new treatment of the built environment create new regional-ity?

Words and Images as Design Thinking Tools Session 3

The humanities – literature, philosophy and fine arts – do not stand in opposition to the design disciplines. This session examines how words and images, including media not traditionally included in the urban design discipline can be brought to rethink the built environment and community. Words and images are not merely there to document the built environment but to aid the creation of new places and subjects.

Session 1 - Critical Alterities

Yin-Lun Chan

Layering Upon Vancouver's Cultural Landscape

Abstract:

It is now quite common that historic ethnic neighbourhoods of Western metropolises are turning from everyday sites into marketed tourist destinations. The current project explores the threats and opportunities that face the preservation and on-going evolution of Vancouver's Chinatown.

Biography:

Ying-Lun Chan completed his Master of Landscape Architecture at the University of British Columbia. His research surrounds issues of migration and rethinking notions of heritage.

Alex Witko

To Practice Bricolage: Tapping a Culture of Consumption for Creative Production

Abstract:

"Waste... a resource in the wrong place" – Chinese proverb

Solid waste is the single most abundant material resource our cities have to offer and a visual reminder of the over-consuming culture in North America. Refuse recovery and design is proposed as a method to combat the subsequent lack of creative engagement with the built world, while revealing value and potential in the very by-products of wastefulness. This process of bricolage not only manifests itself within the architecture but also generates new models of architectural practice and community activism.

Biography:

Alex Witko recently completed his Master of Architecture at the University of British Columbia and is working in Vancouver.

Session 1 - Critical Alterities

Maged Senbel & Sharif Senbel
Canadian Islamic Regionalism

Abstract:

Gulzar Haider stated that the isolation of Muslims in pluralistic Western societies gives them the freedom to question the canons of traditional expression and create a new and profound "Islamicity." This work proposes Islamic Regionalism as a powerful tool for achieving this promise, and introduces a framework for guiding the realization of Islamic Regionalism. The framework includes liturgical, cultural, environmental, technical and participatory design considerations. Our work applies the Islamic Regionalism framework to three mosques in British Columbia designed by one of the co-presenters.

Biography:

Maged Senbel is an assistant professor at the School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia. His research is on participatory design that integrates both cultural and technical aspects of urbanity. Sharif Senbel is principle architect at Studio Senbel, Vancouver.

Session 2 - Place and Civility

Am Johal

The Bureaucratic Delegitimization of Vancouver's Civil Society

Abstract:

As the city has historically developed and responded to social movements, new ideas and cultural changes, the contemporary urban diseases which have resulted include parochialism, passivity and bureaucratic inertia - all of which contribute to a climate of fear. It is the role of citizens to understand the complicity of professionals in urban development, the nature and power of professional language and the intellectual gaps inherent in urban decision making.

In a city where there are no election spending limits, the development and real estate sector have the tendency and capacity to distort public interest decision-making. The talk will investigate the misguided legacy of resident evictions, intergovernmental gridlock and finger-pointing, and the social implications of the hyper-inflated real estate market.

Biography:

Am is a writer and social activist presently working in the office of Jenny Kwan, MLA for Vancouver-Mt.Pleasant. He completed a Master of Economics specializing in European and International Studies at the Institute for Social and European Studies in Hungary and has undergraduate degrees in Commerce and Human Kinetics.

While working on the Vancouver Agreement, Am was involved with the expansion of health services in the Downtown Eastside. He was Ministerial Assistant to the Minister of Transportation and Highways and the Minister of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers, and has served on the board of directors of many organizations including Better Environmentally Sound Transportation, Impact on Communities Coalition, Civil Society Development Project, Urban Solutions Institute, the Or Gallery and Urban Ink Theatre. He was one of the original board members of Vision Vancouver during its inception, and in June 2008, he will be an intern at the UN office of Inter Press Service in New York. He lives right in front of the Chinatown Gate.

Session 2 - Place and Civility

Penny Gurstein + Howard Rotberg

Vancouverism: A Values-Based Analysis of Vancouver's Urbanism

Abstract:

The Vancouver Model is part of a broader set of policies, based on certain values, and we call these cultural values, "Vancouverism." We argue that this ideology and the resultant urban policies and forms of development are based on a myopic vision that negates the future for the young and the low income. The housing created by this model, marketed to a lifestyle, effectively has inhibited the creation of a community based on shared lived experiences, as well as social justice, furthering the bifurcation based on income and home ownership occurring in our society.

Biography:

Penny Gurstein is Acting Director and Professor, School of Community and Regional Planning, UBC. Howard Rotberg is an affordable housing developer and author of the forthcoming book, *Exploring Vancouverism: The Political Culture of Canada's Lotus Land*.

Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe

Greening or Greenwash: Marketing Van-urbanism

Abstract:

The marketing of domicile in "new" Vancouver has increasingly espoused environmental rhetoric and iconography alongside the underlying sell of a sensual simulation rather than a concretely communal urban lifestyle. Applying theoretical and material analysis this paper will assess the extent to which concepts of market-based residential community in Vancouver are being modified and whether its advertising has the capacity to embed sustainable consumption in usual culture.

Biography:

Rhodri is professor and head of the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory at the University of British Columbia. He is the author of *The New Spirit: Modern Architecture in Vancouver, 1938-1963*.

Session 3 - Words and Images

Kathy Mezei

Domestic Matters: A View from the Interior

Abstract:

This presentation will discuss and illustrate concepts of domestic space, domesticity, the everyday, and the interior, and their relevance to the cultural landscape of Vancouver's new neighbourhoods. The creation and preservation of cultural memory and heritage in the context of vernacular cosmopolitanism, "the paradoxical conjoining of the local, parochial and popular with a cosmopolitan worldview" will also be addressed. Examples will be drawn from literature as well as local built forms.

Biography:

Kathy Mezei is a professor at the Department of Humanities, Simon Fraser University. She was the editor of *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology and British Women Writers*. She founded and chairs the Domestic Space Research Group, which researches the relations between subjectivity and architectural spaces.

Jonathan Frantz & Jessica Hallenbeck

A Tale of Two Films: Video and the Right to Participation, Appropriation, and Communication

Abstract:

Video can be a powerful tool for expressing and advancing claims to the city. This paper explores some of the possible ways that video can contribute to the struggle for social justice. Using two short videos as case studies, the research probes the relationship between the right to the city, social justice, and video. This paper argues that video can expand our rights to participation, appropriation, and communication.

Biography:

Jonathan Frantz is co-founder of Ear to the Ground Planning, a company that explores and pushes the boundaries of town planning methodologies. Jon is also an adjunct professor at the University of British Columbia. Jessica Hallenbeck is a graduate of UBC's MA (Planning) program.

Session 3 - Words and Images

Emily Fedoruk
showcases

Abstract:

showcases is a potential gallery. Vancouver is a city fraught with urban growth and change. Analysis of the city's built environment provides us with a seemingly sturdy standpoint from which to view this change, but we can hold architecture accountable for producing urban transformation. As the building of buildings within our city continues to be a driving force behind urban development, an examination of the city from an architectural point of view is both imminent and necessary. Understanding Vancouver's architectural environment from a theatrical point of view — its buildings as performers — allows us to interact with the city critically, culturally, and creatively. *showcases* examines the work of eighteen Vancouver artists who have chosen buildings as their subject. It is a multimedia, interdisciplinary critique with a basis in photography: each work is presented in a photographic medium. This flexible, dynamic approach permits a variety of viewpoints to converge around a common urban centre.

Works by Brandy Colton, Matt Fehr, Tiziana La Melia, Ian Wallace, Christos Dikeakos, Robert Sherrin, Jeff Wall, N.E. Thing Co., Roy Arden, Isabelle Pauwels, Ian Higgins, Reece Terris, Kristina Jaugelis, Ron Terada, Vikky Alexander, and Alex Morrison offer varied perspectives and methods of understanding the construction of the city. *showcases* categorises these artists in three spatial sectors within the gallery: ENTRANCES, IN, and OUT. While each of these lays the foundations for specific criteria of analysis, their arrangement encourages fluidity and exchange above general distinctions. In imposing these discrete categories, *showcases* exposes its own foundations, showing viewers the methodology behind assembly and collection, and inviting them to reconsider how ENTRANCES, OUT, and IN might be redesigned. Vancouver is, after all, a product of our own performances. We inhabit its buildings and create its structures — physical and otherwise. *showcases*, therefore, is an exhibition of our own construction of the city and its images, and of our own urban potentiality.

Biography:

Emily recently completed her BA at SFU and will begin her MA in English this September 2009.

Session 3 - Words and Images

Vanessa Kwan
The Storm and the Fall

Abstract:

This will primarily be an artist talk. With reference to work created in the last 5 years, the talk will focus on the treatment of the Vancouver landscape in my solo practice, as well as in my work with Vancouver-based collective Norma. The work covers a range of media — photography, performance, sculpture and installation — and references a number of themes familiar to Vancouver's recent history and immediate future: monumentality, the proliferation of condo developments, tourism and 'world-class' urban landscapes. The title is taken from a series of essays by experimental architect Lebbeus Woods, whose built environments document systems in flux: when the order of the existing is confronted with the order of the new.

Biography:

Vanessa Kwan is a Vancouver-based artist and writer.

Interdisciplinarity and Coming Communities - Patrick Foong Chan

Abstract

Benedict de Spinoza wrote, "For a free multitude is guided more by hope than fear." Through the literatures of Giorgio Agamben, Michel Foucault, Nigel Thrift and Spinoza this paper explores how interdisciplinary design practices can produce communities of hope, but not a hope predicated upon an ideal but a hope for change and transformation.

The 'Inter' Condition of Urban Design

Different materials, structures, infrastructures, cultures, policies and potentials constitute a city. 'Difference' is a city's form. However, 'difference' can be more than a static collection of things based on binary pairs or variations on a model. In reality difference is also differentiation or the ability for something, someone or some place to become different from itself. Any identity, place or even concept is composed of an aggregate of forces and precisely because they are not given entities, recombination is more than possible. Any identity, place or concept being in contact with another identity, place or concept will contract forces from that identity, place or concept to restructure its composition. Differing interrelations between things allows for the differentiation within a thing. Recombination is also the process of differentiation. [1]

A city is an event of differentiation. Differences within a city are never just based on countable differences. As such, if the city has a consistency it is this 'inter' condition or inter-relation amongst things that spurs differentiation. How should urban design intimately deal with this 'inter' condition? One may suggest it is to act accordingly to the city's reality. Urban design does not just design a city's 'inter' condition but immanently express this 'inter' condition in its own practice. It involves incorporating the spatial, visual and conceptual forces of other disciplines. The disciplinary boundaries of analysis, planning, policy-making, physical design and inhabitation are blurred; the sequence in which one act follows another is constantly changing. With urban design interdisciplinarity exists not just amongst the design disciplines but includes the non-design disciplines and the voices and bodies of the city. Conventional hierarchies and workflows are challenged here.

Like the amorphous practice that is urban design, this *Showroom* symposium-exhibition

also expresses this 'inter' condition. The 'inter' condition allows for an exchange of forces. In terms of rethinking Vancouver's condominium development by way of this 'inter' condition it is never whether the artists, designers or theorists are more correct in diagnosing the state of affairs. Questions pertaining to what forces each participant can extract from other participants and use toward his/her own rethinking should be considered instead. A constant feature of any interdisciplinary practice is that no one discipline's principles and methods are unproblematically superior. Although, this being said one may still suggest that one discipline may have more to offer for a particular project or a particular part of a project. The keyword is appropriateness and not superiority.

To gauge the appropriateness of a discipline is to find out what sorts of forces constitute that discipline, and knowing what forces to extract from that discipline in order to combine them with other forces from another discipline to produce effects. The bringing together of philosophy and urban design is a commonly used interdisciplinary act. Traditionally, philosophy, because it deals with concepts, is viewed to be anterior to design. A designed place is treated as an example of a certain philosophy that has been distilled into a single concept. However, this binary and hierarchy of concept versus example can be challenged by Michel Foucault's understanding of philosophy's function.

Foucault's works deliberately refuse to prescribe what society must be, despite his political ambitions. His works eschew utopia. So, where is the fit between Foucault and urban design, for having no vision is inconsistent with the term 'plan' which conventionally emphasises devising the right means and outcomes. Addressing this charge Foucault points out that society itself (one may infer the city) does not operate upon a defined set of means, more importantly society's 'final' image is unimageable. The means and outcomes must be produced not by plans drafted in isolation but via actual events and engagements. Foucault writes,

It's true that certain people... are not likely to find advice or instructions in my books to tell them 'what is to be done.' But my project is precisely to bring about that they 'no longer know what to do,' so that the acts, gestures, discourses that up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult and dangerous. [2]

Foucault's philosophy's contribution to urban design is not prescriptive. As Bent Flyvberg and Tim Richardson remind us Foucault never intended his philosophy to dictate what our practice should pan out. [3] It is rather how we extract conceptual, textual and poetic forces from his works to recompose our current epistemology, theoretical frameworks, methodologies and methods. An asymmetry exists between Foucault's concepts and the actions that follow. This is what distinguishes Foucault's philosophy from more traditional political philosophy that desires clear outcomes. In a conversation with Gilles Deleuze, Foucault says,

A theory is exactly like a box of tools. It has nothing to do with the signifier. It must be useful. It must function. And not for itself. [4]

The actions that follow an engagement with Foucault's work arise from a "situated action". A situated action is not just an application of a theory to a posterior example; philosophy holds no superiority here. [5] A designer picks out certain conceptual forces from philosophy in order to combine with those spatial and conceptual forces s/he is already acquainted with from his/her practice. A designer must use Foucault's works *in reality*, in actual design-situations. Only through actual usages do new actions and designed-forms emerge. In the actuality of a design-situation one may also encounter other lines of thought, some running smoothly alongside Foucault's, so breaking Foucault's apart. Moreover, sometimes the practice of design may force us to rethink the arguments within certain theories. For example, communicating with a neighbourhood's citizens may reveal unusual power relations that contributes to this neighbourhood's uniqueness, thus a new theory of spatial planning may be required to understand and ultimately sustain this uniqueness. A strictly Foucauldian mode of approaching power relations for this neighbourhood may not be adequate; other lines of thought may be drawn in. Foucault may have to be read alongside Heidegger, indigenous concepts of space as well as the musings of Douglas Coupland. A situated action of design occasions an event of invention and differentiation. Disciplines are interwoven into each other. Within this complex actual design-situation it is not just new places and identities that may emerge, new ways to write spatial planning theory may emerge.

An actual design-situation for urban design involves more than what occurs in a studio. It involves working with actual peoples, places and shifting networks of concepts. Thus, Flyvberg and Richardson suggest that urban design should pay attention to 'realrationality' rather than normative rationality. They suggest a move away from ideal situations. Designers can shift focus away from 'what should be done' and make a "reorientation toward 'what is actually done'—towards *verita effectuale*". [6] We pay attention to new voices that are emerging in actuality. We decipher what forces constitute these voices and most importantly design new strategies to engage with these voices and forces. These voices cannot be generalised. Thus, when working with a community we have to sincerely ask: Are we trying to make that community see a designer's point of view, or, are we together with that community designing a new point of view which possibly is yet expressible according to normative categories of place and identity. In an interdisciplinary practice it is less a matter of designing-for and more a designing-with. Designing-with expresses that 'inter' condition discussed earlier.

Within an interdisciplinary approach our conventional modes of analysis and disciplinary knowledge are broken don when we encounter unfamiliar groups of forces. When we are designing-with others it is often harder to image an absolute outcome. As Foucault suggests, we often 'no longer know what to do' when this mingling happens. However, this not-knowing can be an interesting departure point. In not-knowing we seek out new modes of thinking and acting, we start to communicate with others in new ways to gather information and build new criteria to decipher these information. In not-knowing we begin to build new conceptual and eventually practical frameworks instead of reiterating old frameworks that are colonial in expression.

So, at an actual event such as *Showroom*, we may ask, what can designers learn from artists? The reverse can be asked too. How can the acts of painting and installation become mingled with acts of site analysis, typological studies and streetscape drawings, and how will this mingling change the current conceptions of place and subjectivity imagined by urban designers?

Most importantly, we may ask how our existing approaches to design and design thinking are challenged when we hear fellow participants speak in actuality. What new lines of thinking about place and subjectivities are being generated in this actuality that can seem even frightful? The speed at which forces can collide within the actuality of an interdisciplinary design-situation spur us to experiment with thinking and acting on subjectivities and places in ways the comfortable pace of a normative and isolated ideal situation does not foster. We ask: What new places and subjectivities can arise from this not-knowing?

Making Potential Communities

The means to carry out designs of a city are continually changing. We already conduct a variety of exercises to ensure this continuity; the post-occupancy evaluation (POE) is one obvious example. There is a distinction between maintaining this continuity for the sake of achieving an ideal city/citizenry and maintaining this continuity to promote the constant differentiation of place and subjectivity. How a POE is drafted and analysed is important if a city's complexity is to be sustained. The data gathered from a POE if it is to be put into various redesign acts must again involve the community at hand. The community should be brought into new series of actual design-situations. Critical spatial and social planning reminds us the POE is done not just to see whether urban designers have done a good enough job, but to provide data, voices and forces – that allows for the design of a community in transformation.

Communities are made, unmade and remade. The form and identity of a community is always coming. The “coming community” for philosopher Giorgio Agamben is characterised by a “whatever being”. For Agamben, this “whatever” is tied to what a singularity which is not so much an unchanging entity but a singularity in the sense of something that is ready to become something else. The “whatever being” is thus a being that possesses great potentials. [7]

An important thing to remember about potentiality according to Agamben is that potentiality is never divorced from actuality. While the word ‘potential’ generally denotes something that is set in the future, Agamben locates potentialities in the actual present. Additionally, Agamben suggests that potentiality is more than something one can predict, it can also be

that which is unimageable. He elaborates, every thought also “exists as a potential not to think,” and every word or sentence written is also the potential not to write. [8] What is written is inclusive of what is yet to be written. However, what is yet to be written does not designate only the opposite of what has already been written, in other words something imageable. Potentiality for Agamben includes something truly unqualifiable and unquantifiable at present but nonetheless is in the present. He surmises:

Pure actuality, that is, the actuality of an act, is pure potentiality, that is, the potentiality of potentiality. [9]

Agamben's notions of potentiality can be further elaborated through Jean-Luc Nancy's formulation on writing: “Writing [is] that which does not respond to any model whatsoever of the appropriation of significations, that which opens at once relation and, along with relation, significance itself.” The “message” of this kind of writing is not a “signified”; it is not even a plurality of relativised signifiers, but what Nancy calls “the toward.” [10] What writing offers is the intensive move towards something that cannot be mapped out in advance. What writing signifies is the potentiality of the multiple ways a text can be engaged with. For example, the kind of actions and thoughts that may emerge from engaging with Foucault's writings is innumerable. Thus, writing is not about locking down the world in textual representation and making prescriptions. Nancy suggests, writing that expresses this “toward” tend forth to a community that resists its own hypostasis. [11] This asymmetrical relationship between writing and action expresses the more profound unimageable potentiality that Agamben speaks of.

Agamben and Nancy's understanding of actuality to harbour potentiality mainly regards literature and philosophic writings. However, this approach to the unity of actuality and potentiality can be expressed in urban and community design. To design neighbourhoods for a community is not to lock people and place into one identity. To design is to gather new groupings of socio-historical, economical, artistic, textual, spatial, conceptual and cultural forces that may express subjectivities and spatialities yet to come. Urban designers are not fates. In other words, the actuality of a design practice expresses the potential of potentialities and new actualities. It is this point about actuality that connects back to

earlier discussions on Foucault's stress on situated-actions instead of ideal environments for the understanding and making of societies.

In designing a coming community the whole traditional scheme of signification, the equivalence between subjectivity and object, concept and object is challenged. [12] This is especially true when dealing with Vancouver, a field of criss-crossing local and international forces. There will never be a designed building or site that can unproblematically represent a coming Vancouver. Homi Bhabha writes that "identikit political idealism" ignores the reality of history-making which always threatens binary and sequential historiography. The political object of a transformative community is "neither the one nor the other, [it] properly alienates out political expectations." [13]

So what are actual signs of a community that alienates out political expectations? Nigel Thrift, in consideration of a vitalist urban life, suggests "temporary articulations of creating/inventing," which can spur actions and outcomes that destabilise the urban and social fabric in order to reform new modes of being. And, this process of actualising and de-actualising to occasion new potentials perpetually renews itself. [14] Thus, when considering a vital Vancouver identikit buildings and neighbourhoods representing identikit political idealism are of little value. The vital is not something merely postulated but that which *is acting*. It can be experimentations with physical design conducted together by designers, the citizens and the City Hall. Beyond simple civil disobedience there can be experimentations with physical design conducted together by designers, the citizens and City Hall. Here, micro-zones or temporary re-zones may be outcomes.

In a vitalist city zones are in reality changing their function. The physical designs originally designated by a zoning code can be acted upon differently: Parks built to beautify and pacify a neighbourhood may be used by activists. Laneways designed for service vehicular traffic may become outdoor venues for art exhibitions. Neighbourhood cornershops and butcheries as much as three blocks from main arterials become galleries. Houses within residential zones may become gallery spaces where future generations of urban designers may gather. Temporary and permanent structures facilitating explorations on social relations and modes of living are built in backyards. A community's sense of place and identity

is constantly reproduced in its varying engagement with the city's physical design.

All the abovementioned usages of the physical environment are heterotopias. Places like these are at once inside proper city zones and outside of these zones. [15] The capability of having multiple places exist within a physical boundary is partly made possible by its use that defies alignment with traditional observance of work time. As we have seen a house can function as a residence and a gallery at different times. But, this temporal quality of heterotopias is expressed not just through the defiance of traditional observance of time. While places designed with utopic visions in mind tend toward the eternal, heterotopias "are absolutely temporal." [16] What is built may be temporary; they allow new forces in and out of their assemblage hence allowing different futures to potentially emerge.

To sustain vitality a designer recognises his/her physical design as merely providing spatial, material, infrastructural forces to a city or neighbourhood, how these forces are used can be rather open. An asymmetry exists between a community's subjectivity and the physical design of a neighbourhood. A physical design is an actuality that provides the conditions for the emergence of potentialities.

Community, as Agamben writes, is an infinite series of modal oscillations between actuality and potentiality. The politics of a coming community is no longer a duel between the State and the people. It is no longer setting up communities that are diametric opposites of the State. To do so still abides by the spatial, subjectival and economical zonings desired by conventional and colonial modes of planning. Rather, a coming community's political object and identity oscillates between what it actually is presently and what it is becoming (its potentialities). [17] More importantly this will to transformation is embodied by the city leaders as well. In a coming-Vancouver our policy-makers will weave the city's complex forces into their epistemology and methodology. In a coming-Vancouver policy-makers, designers and citizens recognise that within any master plan drawn there are maps and zones yet drawn, and from these potential maps and zones yet-defined subjectivities and places exist.

Worthy life

Potentialities are hopes for changes that may be greater than the designated futures we are too used to. On the subject of hope and society, Baruch Spinoza writes,

For a free multitude is guided more by hope than fear; a conquered one, more by fear than hope: inasmuch as the former aims at making use of life, the latter but at escaping death. The former, I say, aims at living for its own ends, the latter if forced to belong to the conqueror; and so we say that this is enslaved, but that free. [18]

Spinoza's free multitude, a society guided by multiplicity and change, is that which attends to the *living of life*, recognising that life is expressed by change rather than by static being. Drawing from Spinoza's understanding of life, Deleuze writes,

A life is everywhere, in every moment which a living subject traverses and which is measured by the objects that have been experienced, an immanent life carrying along the events or singularities that are merely actualised in subjects and objects.

- The indefinite life does not itself have moments, however close they may be, but only between-times, between-moments. It does not arrive, it does not come after, but presents the immensity of an empty time where one sees the event to come and already past, in the absolute of an immediate consciousness. [19]

Designers, citizens and government officials must honour this one eternal principle of life. Nigel Thrift and Ash Amin consider change as urban life's "basic ontology". [20] Life never follows a single path, telos is not just deferred but kept as an unimageable potential. The telos is unimageable because, as Deleuze writes, each moment in life is capable of folding in multiple forces hence transforming and increasing the potentials that moment of life can open unto. Each moment of life is in fact between what it was and the multiplicities it may become. [21]

Design may tend to life's only constant – its state of change, its becoming. It is not about representing change for designers and their work stand *within* the changing city and not at the end of history to reflect on the entirety of life. Geographer John Ploger notes, a

city's vitality is a field of forces and not an object that can be put on paper as a graphic or text. [22] Vitality is a city's formless form. The urban designer recognises this fact. Likewise, those between-times and between-moments Deleuze speaks of will always exist. So, what is design's purpose if such energy already exists? Design brings these existential conditions into attention so that we as a community do not pretend the perfect city can lie peacefully at the end of history; history and precisely time itself is a becoming. This is design's immanent philosophic act.

How can urban design facilitate greater potentialities for change, rather than forcing allegiance to this or that social category or identikit political idealism? How can the design of urban spaces help spur a life lived for its own ends and hopes as per Spinoza's free society? These questions cannot be adequately addressed if we keep urban design's function as merely representational or as strive towards imageable ends.

Design can be approached as an act that opens up possibilities instead of reducing the city to a slogan-like identity. In consideration of change and true community participations, design's purpose may be geared toward transformations, challenges and play instead of limits. This is why the question of how urban designers may develop new ways to approach the city instead of relying solely on conventional plans and documentations is important. There is perhaps value in including within client presentations plans, drawings and other media elements that challenge the telic character of design. Epistemological and methodological changes are vital.

The 'right' city or community is, if change and vitality are a city's formless forms, becomes something irreducible. It is interesting to note that for the Spinoza-inspired Agamben the a coming community's "ethical" character becomes evident only when it is recognised that "the good is not, and cannot be, a good thing or possibility beside or above every bad thing or possibility, that the authentic and the true are not real predicates of an object perfectly analogous (even if opposed) to the false and the inauthentic." [23] A coming community's ethics is formed by the oscillations between different modes of being and thinking, it is immanent in the complexity and conflicts that are present at acts of co-creation, participatory designs and other interdisciplinary exercises. Ethics are guided

by actual situations, and situations bring about change in subject and place. Ethics likewise can be reproduced from the contraction and expulsion, the regrouping, of various social, interpersonal, political, spatial, historical and architectural forces. Ethics are eternally in an ungrounding process. The ethical life is here and yet to come.

To plan a community's identity is to actually find ways to sustain such conflicts and complexity. Thrift gives designers the advice to be ready to "take hold of accidents and slips, [and be] able to draw on skills that can conjure up other wheres." [24] We plan not for what future communities must be. Instead we plan, design and build groups of forces – political, architectural, spatial, cultural, economical, etc – needed to sustain the potential emergence of communities which place and being is yet-known. Of course, the actual methods involved in carrying out these transformative and potential-bearing acts cannot be prescribed. As we have seen with Foucault and Agamben, the task of philosophy when mingled with design is never to decide which design action is good or bad. There is only the momentary appropriateness of certain groups of forces that, for a certain project (situated-action), express a power to effect change more swiftly. Again, design actions are only to be founded in the actuality of the task, the *actual* design-situation.

A city or community's worth is its potential for change through the recognition, inclusion and sustaining of conflicts and challenges. And these conflicts and challenges are often found(ed) in interdisciplinary design situations.

References

- [1] Gilles Deleuze. *Difference and Repetition* (P. Patton, trans.). London and New York: Continuum. 1994. p.39. For Deleuze, difference is not just relative or comparative but difference-from-itself. It is "difference in kind".
- [2] Foucault quoted in James Miller. *The Passion of Michel Foucault*. New York: Simon and Schuster. 1993. p.235.
- [3] Bent Flyvberg and Tim Richardson. "Planning and Foucault: In Search of the Dark Side of 'Planning Theory'" in *Planning Futures: New Directions for Planning Theory* (P. Allmendinger and M. Tewdwr-Jones, eds.). London and New York: Routledge. 2002, p.57.
- [4] Michel Foucault. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*

(D.F. Bouchard and S. Simon, eds. and trans.). Ithaca: Cornell UP. 1977. p.208.

[5] Flyvberg and Richardson. P.57.

[6] Ibid. p.60.

[7] Giorgio Agamben. *The Coming Community* (M. Hardt, Trans.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. p.1

[8] Giorgio Agamben. *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (D. Heller-Roazen, ed. & trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford UP. 1999. p.215

[9] Ibid. p.216.

[10] Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Sense of the World* (J.S. Librett, trans.). Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press. 1997. p.118.

[11] Ibid. p.119.

[12] Agamben. 1999. p.208.

[13] Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge. 1004. p.24.

[14] Nigel Thrift. "Summoning life" in *Envisioning Human Geographies* (P. Cloke, P. Crang, & M. Goodwin, eds.). London: Arnold Press. 2004, p.85

[15] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" in *Diacritics* (16:1, Spring 1986, 22-7). p.24.

[16] Ibid. p.26.

[17] Agamben. 1993. p.19.

[18] Benedict de Spinoza. "A Political Treatise" in *A Theologico-Political Treatise and A Political Treatise* (R.H.M. Elwes, trans.). New York: Mineola. 2004. p.315.

[19] Gilles Deleuze. "Immanence: A Life" in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995* (D. Lapoujade, ed. and A. Hodges and M. Taormina, trans.). New York and Los Angeles: Semiotext(e). 2006. p.387.

[20] Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift. *Cities: Reimagining the urban*. Cambridge, UK: Polity. 2002. p.26-30.

[21] Deleuze. 2006. p.388.

[22] John Ploger. "In Search of Urban Vitalis" in *Space and Culture* (9:4, November 2006, 382-399). p.389.

[23] Agamben. 1993. p.13.

[24] Thrift. 2004. p.97

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