

SECTION 3

# Nation/World/Spectacle



# 11

## Introduction: Enacting Modernity

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Is it possible to gather up the discrepant materials, sentiments, forms and efforts of various peoples and ‘send them off’ into a horizon that everyone values as either necessary or better? Or is any assemblage always provisional and haphazard—full of tensions and make-shift ‘deals’ where the contributions of components are always subject to negotiations among their ‘messy’ inclinations and histories? These questions, at the heart of architecture and urbanism’s long preoccupation with modernity, continue to haunt a world increasingly convinced that it was never ‘modern’ and re-emphasize the contestations always at work in how things—materials, language, bodies—are brought together. In other words, the concerns of the present seem to deal with the troublesome practices and designs that attempt to assemble coordinated understandings and actions about what can be done, where, and how.

These questions have stretched the notions of architecture to encompass mathematics and finance which attempt to generate models about how vastly divergent locations, economies, and ways of doing and valuing things can circulate through each other, and generate surplus value through the unpredictable products of such circulation. Architecture has

also engaged various political ecologies and discourses of sustainability which attempt to visualize complex interdependencies among bodies, infrastructure, climates and environments. All deal with fundamental questions about what it is possible for people and things to do with each other, what they can make, for whom, and what the implications of this making will be.

In this introductory section, Abidin Kusno, Duanfang Lu, Shiloh Krupar and Stefan Al take up these questions by exploring various facets of the relationship of architecture to modernity, the nation, and power in three chapters. Each has marked resonance and cross-cutting reiterations. Kusno emphasizes the volatile and always to be worked out relationship between the nation and the state. Lu focuses on how to think about and engage the tricky multiplicities of modernity. Krupar and Al focus on how architecture shifts from the performative display of ideological solidities to the enwrapping of affect and experience into more viral forms of power through stretching the operations of spectacle. In all of these explorations, architecture cannot be held as some stable instrument of discourse or techné, but itself becomes a shifting array of effects.

For if a critical locus of modernity has been the confluence of the individual as a stabilized object of discipline and reflection, as well as the predominant mode of consciousness, then architecture is deeply implicated in the very enactment of modernity—rather than simply a descriptive feature of it.

As Lefebvre (1991) indicates, actions initiated or compelled from an environment act in the elaboration of space. Space is not something that actors are ‘set’ in or ‘emerge’ from. Rather, actors and environments mutually participate in the constitution of overlapping, switching and modulated registers of operation in which perception is steered and behaviour habituated to apprehend specific boundaries, distinctions and trajectories—in terms of the experience of inside and out, here and there, now and then. The individual is an architectural instrument and an object of architecture. At times this relationship between instrument and object is self-reinforcing and transformative, and so the details of how this relationship is conducted become critical in thinking about potentialities and constraints, openings and confinement.

For Lu, in her concise and sweeping review of how modernity appears in the world and its impact on it, this terrain of the relational reveals just how modernity has been capable of acting like a trickster – changing skins and masks, replicating itself in seemingly contradictory ways. At the same time, it is forced to consort with ghosts – ways of thinking and doing things it supposedly got rid of, but really can’t afford to if it is to be, as Lu says, an epochal force from which no society can escape. For the trick of modernity is to have acted as a system of comprehensiveness and completion, positing a linear trajectory of development in which novelty, abstraction, and the arbitrariness of representation can all be handled without upending the rational calculations of what was to come.

In architecture, it entailed the appropriation of vernacular forms and experiences, and incorporating them into a frame of

abstraction that sought to erase the traces of origin and use. The erasure is not so much of the reference itself. Rather, it is as if the abstraction acted as some deep structure which could give rise to heterogeneity of expression. Therefore, differences in people’s ways of doing things and seeing the world weren’t really different, but were rather various forms of certain generic cognitive and moral principles that varied in terms of their level of development. Everyone was heading for the same place, but at different times, and this lag constituted a platform that justified different regimes of regard and rule.

During the past several decades there has been an attempt to get out of this scheme of developmental lags by positing the existence of multiple or alternative modernities that embody the purported efforts of all people to exceed the terms of a given recognition and to take advantage of unanticipated and dense relations with the world. Such aspirations are particularly exemplified in and by cities.

In cities, different settlement histories are at work and intersect in different ways. Within these histories are different capacities for making things happen. New ground is charted and sometimes different ways of life contract. They hold their place in more narrow versions of themselves. Particular kinds of neighbourhoods, with particular kinds of residents and ways of doing things, may extend themselves across the city. They may disappear in some places and reappear in others. They may fracture and regroup as smaller enclaves in different parts of the city, or simply integrate themselves into other more predominant forms of social identity. A highly mixed neighbourhood of different kinds of residents and activities may simply become available to mixtures of a new kind. What starts out as a highly homogenous, for example suburban area, may over a matter of decades become highly mixed or viceversa. In other words, the various processes of so-called ‘urban modernity’, such as gentrification, sustainability, diversification, and growth – to name a few of the keywords

attached to critical urban processes – do not necessarily take place in necessarily stable and clearly recognizable ways.

Lu chooses to use the notion of ‘entangled modernities’ to deal with this multiplicity. This proves to be an important strategic move. Otherwise, to talk about many modernities is to implicitly emphasize a notion of equivalence. Not that all modernities are the same. But differences then become subsumed to various versions of modernity, of a general equivalence, or as Jean-Luc Nancy (2000) says, a new form of the One, as a monstrosity that precludes renewal. Rather, Nancy emphasizes that we are in a world that is in itself broken, and that the multiplicity of bodies and experiences that might recognize a commonality can only do so in the sense of being exposed to and sharing-out this brokenness. The notion of multiple modernities makes divergent, parasitical exchanges somehow equal. It doubles the practice whereby modernity itself was an accumulation of gifts – taken through imperial manoeuvres and then effaced as gifts, as something compelling the continuity of some ongoing exchange. History is made to seem self-transparent, without debt.

After all, it was through bestowing a general equivalence to the colonies—through the granting of independence and nationhood—that the West was able to deal with a wide range of struggles and aspirations whose terms and feelings were not always recognizable in any conventional language. This granting of sovereignty, of recognition, then made the terms of interaction understandable. Even though nations of the ‘developing world’ did not have the capacities and power of their ‘equivalents’, they were not fully part of the ‘world of nations’.

Lu avoids these problems of equivalence by exploring the coupling of the postcolonial and the postmodern, and the ways in which the supposed dissipation of grand narratives opens up the way for mimetic play. Here, diverse national and regional settings take things from each other and haunt each other with unexpected versions of themselves – something

aided by the proliferation of mimetic machines and technologies which continuously reconfigure the space of the relationships between self and other, North and South. Here, the West cannot get rid of ghosts.

As we know, mimesis is a tricky game of doubling. As Taussig (1993) points out, the mimetic always releases features, capacities and dimensions that the original was incapable of – but which must have been there all along, as well as the sense that the ‘reality’ of the original did not have to be what it was. After all, this is the possibility of transformation and renewal. Modernity then is always anxious about itself. In the same place and time, another set of conditions, another way of doing things, and another reality has always already been possible – and in an important way, was always already *in place*.

For example, it is precisely this virtual presence of *cityness* in each and every major and mundane action undertaken to structure urban life that is made peripheral – even if the viability of urban economies, governance, and innovation requires that *cityness* as an essential resource. Thus, in cities there is always a certain *doubleness* of time – a sense that behind the present moment, there is another time operating, other things taking place, unfolding, waiting, getting ready or slipping away, and that we know only a fragment of what is proceeding. The seemingly coherent landscape of the city is the result of a process where unruly eruptions, interference and murkiness are negated or erased. With this erasure, whatever appears coherent about the city is fundamentally tenuous and uneasy. It is always uncertain as to the extent to which ‘urban development’ adequately conceals both the operations of erasure, as well as what was erased, denied, or pushed aside.

This haunting is not dissimilar to that long embodied in some of the critical works of African American scholars from DuBois’ *The Soul of Black Folks* to Tony Morrison’s *Beloved*. In this work, the lost souls of slaves never have a home to return to or even a final

destination in mind. There can never be a putting to an end of what has transpired, for there is always more to what happened which can never be fully experienced nor put to rest. Modernity assumes that eventually all that had been left out can be brought in and integrated, and that, perhaps more importantly, the 'debt' owed through exclusion and appropriation could be paid off simply by inclusion. But as Hortense Spillers (2003) points out, there are desires that have no home in language.

For the sacrifices made, for recouping losses that cannot be recouped, for making spaces in circumstances that did not provide any, there are desires that cannot be accommodated by modernity. Not that these desires point to a space outside modernity, but a facet that it cannot acknowledge – an absolute limit in its ability to take everything all in, which after all is something on which it has been predicated. In order to act as all-encompassing, modernity has had to preclude, for example, the transmigration of souls or the fact that different times and ways of being could inhabit each other. These become the ghosts of an endless haunting which Lu then sees these as the presence of many different kinds of knowledge.

So, if, as Maurizio Lazzarato (2004) indicates, the subject is the concern of the soul under modernity, the soul is again a concern for architecture. For as Anselm Franke and Hila Peleg (2008) point out, there is an ecstatic dimension to the mimetic play in postcolonial relationships where the individual becomes the space that is imitated, displays and exhibits it in a way that no analytical distance is possible and the experience of distinctions – of background/foreground; self/world – is suspended. The vast spread of evangelical Christianity across the world, where not only is the distance between performer and audience, preacher and congregation, God and human beings eroded, but the spaces of daily operations become products of a 'speaking in tongues', of a direct possession by the holy spirit and the concretization of that spirit. Here, there are

no historical distinctions or continuities, and instead the interchangeability of life and death.

As Filip de Boeck (2006) says about the everyday culture of Kinshasa, in a city with little of anything institutional to provide it coherence, any sense of anchorage in viable infrastructure, governance or economy, there is nothing to hold its attention in a particular direction. As a result, everything is taken in bits and pieces from the world – memories, recitations, disconnected signs, dreams of Europe, fetishes, images from anywhere – and put to work as materials for organizing plural worlds that individuals have to step in and out of. In some respects, this is similar to what Nigel Thrift (2005) calls 'fugitive materials' – traditions, codes, linguistic bits, jettisoned and patchwork economies, pirated technologies, bits and pieces of symbols – that increasingly find their way into all cities. But in Kinshasa, the second world of mystique and of the imaginary is so prolific that it overtakes any discernible sense of reality.

If there is to be justice in the entangled relations that have characterized modernity, then as Badiou (2005) indicates it occurs in the midst of a flux of places – there is no right place or time. Soul, here, is a notion of space, a space no one figure occupies or determines, something that exceeds the normal disposition of bodies, and in which everyone must travel, without sign posts, without the language of diplomacy, and in which everyone must bear gifts.

Abidin Kusno (chapter 12) takes up the relationship of architecture to the unstable coupling of nation and state. The elaboration of the political as the navigation among the bifurcations of nation and state has long dominated postcolonial thought. Increasingly, politics is the space where subjects operate in between notions of community and the heterogeneous realities of a populace and, as such, it is the space where a 'people', a collective subject becomes visible. Here visibility becomes a resource for people, as they recognize particular ways of being together,

of what it is possible to do together. As such, it is a resource particularly important for the state to harness and control. In consequence, as AbdelMalik Sayad (2006) indicates, strategies of visibility can be seen as a menace.

Kusno talks about the use of architecture as a technology of power, particularly in terms of the visualization of the national 'geo-body', and perhaps the very notion of the national subject. But the very need to make such a body visible again raises the notions of ghosts. For under slavery and colonial rule, on plantations, in work camps and in cities, colonized subjects made a sense of collective life in the shadows. As long as they offered up representations of themselves to the gazes of their 'masters' that emphasized dysfunction, confusion and fragmentation, they were largely free to experiment with various ways of being together, of making economies, domestic and social life.

These were largely invisible because the slave quarters, the popular neighbourhoods, the hostels, and dormitories – although the objects of colonial rule – were not considered legitimate places where the rulers would go. It is from these contexts that revolts emerged, and where particular ways of framing aspirations, moral sentiments, and political practices were largely developed. Even if trade unions, universities, religious institutions and bureaucracies were the contexts in which key leaders of anti-colonial, anti-slavery, and liberation movements were trained and began to organize, they, nevertheless, had to deal with these invisibilities.

In the aftermath of independence, nations required a series of interlocking apparatuses in order to concretize the formation of a 'people' – i.e. systems to regulate borders, define responsibilities and rights of its citizens, and to extract from them capabilities, loyalty and resources. It is not a world where people with their differences were assembled and reassembled in various configurations of possibility. Rather, they were individualized under the pretence of legislative equality. Thus, the nation had to continuously perform a certain excess – with ceremony, celebra-

tion, commemoration, and above all the spectacular in the built environment.

The built environment is a particularly significant modality through which the nation performs its ubiquity, its immediacy (its presence in people lives) and instantaneity (its ability to know what its citizens really want and need) – all of the dimensions of a simulated divinity. The construction of cities with its freeways, complexes, and monuments is the materialization of the nation's pervasive ability to enter into the very heart of its citizen's lives.

As an instrument of modernity – in building 'modern nations' – the built environment is used as language of summation, of bringing to a close what can be remembered and what can be said about what the nation is – its eventuality and composition. While it is important to always recognize what a nation has endured, it is important that such attention not crowd out certain implications of the endurance.

Taking the example of nations emerging from colonization, there is an incessant question as to how the resourcefulness and implications of another past were not actualized – i.e. the invisibilities of the efforts made under difficult circumstances to 'become a people'. It is not that these possibilities were precisely defined, as in a revolutionary programme or set of policies, but rather a sense that something could have happened which did not, and which perhaps is not completely laid to rest. In its efforts to concretize the parameters of nationhood, the state uses the built environment to structure particular worlds in which citizens will interact and thus curtail 'that which is yet to come', as well as discipline citizens seen to be getting out of hand. The built environment will be used to justify claims and privileges of all kinds; it will be re-interpreted and re-framed in light of new information and events; it will be qualified and even demeaned as repetitions of old ways become visible in the present.

It is not an easy question to consider just what states are to do with these more

invisible aspirations and practices, or even the possibility embodied by the nation as a 'deep horizontal comradeship'. Such aspirations easily can turn into claims of a particular authenticity, and Kusno warns of how the coupling of regionalism with nationalism can spawn a darker form of patchworked nationalism, where the need to realize the authentic legacies and aspirations of a people can only be worked out through authoritarian management. At the same time, as has been evidenced through much of modernist architectural discourse, supposedly universalistic rational and legal systems of thought and governance mask highly parochial cultural sentiments.

The state appropriates the built environment as an instrument of self-aggrandizement, it converts horizontal comradeship into an authoritarian right to rule, and deploys universalistic, rational frameworks of development, design and governance for highly particularistic interests. But also somewhere in-between these manoeuvres, there is a space where modernity might offer, as Kusno puts, a radically new time which can translate into popular mobilization.

Using the example of the Indonesian poet, Mas Marco Kartodikromo, Kusno talks about how different notions of citizenship could emerge from the engagement with colonial urban modernity. This engagement could be an 'insurgent' one, in that it constituted an arena that provided new challenges for a wide range of vernacular practices. It was an incitement to exceed the terms of what was familiar while, at the same time, went beyond the implications and meanings that this modernity embodied.

Such insurgency has become a particularly vital practice on the part of architects throughout the postcolonial world as the struggles for a right to the city, for the provision of urban services and housing, for participation in the governance of cities, and the fight for the legitimacy of a wide array of local economies and entrepreneurial practices become arenas in which new forms of collective life are enacted.

As Kusno concludes, making an analytical difference between state and nation 'allows architecture to be seen as a site of tension, struggle, and compromise between them'. It also enables it to be a vital instrument in the exploration of what Ann Stoler (2008) calls 'relational histories' – where imperial formations are rethought as 'politics of dislocation and deferral that cut through the nation-state by delimiting interior frontiers as well as exterior ones' (205). Here, it is important to understand the highly particular trajectories of ruin and wastage to which specific sites and people have been subjected. The ways particular landscapes have been rendered toxic or inoperable, the particular kinds of wounds and incapacities that have been experienced and carried over, the continuities of colonial relations that are relocated into the midst of the metropole through urban planning and particular forms of spatial politics – all must be considered through detailed examinations of particular entangled relationships within various domains of power; all of which employ architectural concepts and designs to configure and enforce their particularities.

Deep horizontal comradeship is also to be located outside of the binaries of state and nation. Often, localities will be articulated to macro-cultural solidarities that extend themselves across international domains but do not consolidate themselves as specific political sovereign territories. Rather, these solidarities attempt to convey an already embodied realization and, as such, make the international order one replete with contradictory repertoires of engagement and transaction. Yet, in such a field, the 'nation' can become a locus and site of innovation – i.e. an innovation of mediation between accelerated individuation and the internationalized processes from which such individuation is operationalized and played out.

For many Muslims, the *ummah* – a deep horizontal comradeship that crosses the temporary convenience of nations – remains a real aspiration. Sometimes the *ummah* is thought of as a nation with an actual unified



government, ruled by *shari'ah* or the return of a caliphate. But mostly it is considered to be a nation that exceeds the trappings of governmental and juridical particularity, a fundamental locus of identification and means of consolidating an unyielding sense of togetherness.

Ironically, in the hardscrabble world of geopolitics, much attention has been placed on the Gulf as a strange attractor of star architects and mega-urban projects. But much more importantly, in terms of this discussion, the Emirates, in particular, represent the concrete diffusion of a form of the *ummah* through massive investments in the built and financial environments of the Muslim world; where Dubai, instead of being a territorialized urban entity, becomes a concept to be diffused across the North and West Africa, as well as the Horn. In other words, through its massive current account surpluses, and its increasing status as a critical financial centre offering alternatives to the US dollar denominated bonds and security, the Emirates can not only intervene into built environments around the world, but establish 'parallel' worlds within them. These become in some important ways the concrete machinery through which an *ummah* is further recognized.

On the other hand, there are more ephemeral lines of articulation which link a range of diffuse struggles, people, memories and erasures into a form of what Gavin Williams (2002) calls 'like-being'. In his meditation on the relations between Salvadoran gang members in Los Angeles who have never even seen El Salvador and the remnants of their ancestors who may or may not have been directly involved in the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), as well as the perpetuities of violence that seem to efface any difference between war and peace, Williams talks about the spectral promise of the continuation of the struggle for transformation. In other words, different situations across the world, barely linked by common nationality, ethnicity, or events, may in their own ways participate in an

opaque resemblance or an 'actively unprogrammed contagion' and yet, still operate in concert, still remain phantom subjectivities at work in remaking the world. Again, the issue of modernity consorting with ghosts.

Krupar and Al (chapter 14) take up the processes through which the operations of spectacle have been progressively translated into the notion of brands. Whereas spectacle, affected through manipulations of the built environment that brought people together in large scale acts of exhibition, witnessing and consumption, once cemented particular ideological foundations for people acting in concert, the objective of branding is to increasingly act directly on experience and affect. It attempts to circumvent the need for an audience being together, either actually or virtually, to witness a particular performance. Rather, a much more viral operation is in mind, a way in which power can address itself not only to a social body, but to micro-phages and synapses, as well as to cognitive phase spaces and forms of attentiveness. Starting with critiques of Guy Debord, they explore notions of interactive spectacle which sutures the use of the spectacle as an instrument for creating a sense of unification and wholeness to the more diffuse consumption of prolific commodities in a maneuver that weakens social bonds and 'corrals mutually indifferent consumers'.

Key here for architecture is the increasing disjunction of the surface from function and semantic depth, so that the surface becomes a scene with its own autonomous operations, and thus the promoter of relations among a wider range of actors. The object of consumption is to be attuned to ever more particular and proliferating sensibilities, inclinations and situations. Maximizing profit is seen as best accomplished through crossing the distinctions between labour in commerce, education, and the arts – where all of these fields of drawn upon so that branding conveys the sense of a comprehensive experience. In order to wrap up so many different facets of living within the brand, decisions, productive systems, forms of engagement

with social fields, and modalities of representation must be diverse, flexible, and dynamic. These are all processes that the Situationists valorized as antithetical to the spectacle, but are now part and parcel of the efficacy of the brand.

The brand attempts to be a particular architecture of mediation in the uncertain relationships between the need to maximize the rate of profit, threatened by overproduction and rising costs of production, the need to flexibly develop and engage new fields of consumption, and the enhanced potentialities to create unforeseen worlds of consumption that ensue from what Lazzarato (2004) calls the 'cooperation between minds'. Finance requires architecture of circulation in order to move widely. Capital must be put to use to cultivate opportunities that enable it to spread out, to be applied to a wide range of situations. This is why it is also placed and positioned in, for example, real estate development, both for the accumulation of rents and as objects of speculation. Place embodies a particular interaction of knowledge, labour, technology, infrastructure and resources. It takes time to cultivate the capacities of place, but once done, place exerts capacity quickly when knowledge is a scarce commodity.

In a world where production systems are increasingly deterritorialized, displaced, and parcelled out – where they take place among a wide range of places—they are socialized through networks. In other words, how communication takes place, how different experiences in different places are translated in terms of each other, how people in different places come to see each other as mutual participants in the same place – is the accomplishment of networks that exceed particularistic forms of identification and that create the experience of being in 'one world'.

The problem for capitalist production systems is how this knowledge of networks, of mutually constitutive experiences of simultaneity, is to be priced. Extra-economic conditions of competitiveness become colonized through the value-form, yet they must maintain the creativity of the extra-economic

engagements of arts, education, and psychology. It is these challenges which 'brand-scapes' try to mediate, as they seek to create specific experiences of being together, transformed and enlivened without the necessary adherence to the dictates of particular places, codes, allegiances, or even ideological baggage. Participants can feel like they are part of a cutting edge and a new frontier.

Spectacle has also become, according to Kruper and Al, the elaboration of an 'atmos-fear; – i.e. 'a pedagogical device that produces fear, legitimates state power and mobilizes a political economy of disaster'. As Massumi (2005) points out, fear makes it as if that which is feared has already occurred. The identity of any possible object, what something might be – i.e. how anything, however mundane could become an object of danger or terror – increasingly determines the affective quality of the actual situation. Here, people are to live under a constant state of emergency, to be prepared to experience threats everywhere and thus subsume critical analysis and political mobilization to exigencies of quick decisions.

Institutional analysis becomes increasingly based on stochastic models of randomness and catastrophe, where it becomes increasingly difficult to know in advance what is likely to happen based on a thorough and careful analysis of present conditions. Thus the emphasis is on probabilities and pre-emption – i.e. seeing in the present an entire future trajectory of particular behaviours, characters and inclinations which are read into as portending future threats. Thus even the most banal circumstances can be imbued with a sense of danger.

In this reorientation of temporality, the immediacy of present experiences becomes even more valorized, and thus the object of architectural work. Experiences are to be made more dynamic, direct, singular, affecting and intense – efforts which are often translated into the creation of large energy-intensive atmospheres which attempt to operate at all senses, registers, and scales of apprehension. Here, 'brandage', as Kruper

and AI indicate, envisions experience to be authentic presence and location as an essentialized truth. Somehow the 'real' can be really captured if only the right images of it can be conjured and conveyed. Yet as Kruper and AI point out, this aspiration assumes an undifferentiated subject that can be transformed through particular operations of the image and is prompted by deterministic economic readings that tend to fix viewers to the image as a delimiting false consciousness.

Instead, they emphasize the need to re-conceptualize the spectacle through governance, as the objective of governance is to steer social systems in ways that modify their structural operations, their interests, and their understandings about what they do in specific circumstances and settings. The structural constraints inscribed in institutions and production systems – i.e. what they think it is possible to do – are not inherent. Rather, these constraints are contingent upon the characteristics of specific spatio-temporal horizons of actions through which institutions and spectacles operate.

As such, political processes are essentially precarious and unstable. In politics, social relationships tend to be isolated from the complex and continuous web of causal connections from which they emerge. These social relationships are, then, set up as both explicit objects and instruments of politics. Such manoeuvres undoubtedly generated unanticipated consequences – and this why in part there has been such emphasis on intervening at the level of affect and pre-cognition. For these consequences can make other subjects, projects, and interests visible that have not been visible before. While attempting to steer complex institutional arrangements and relationships through a complex environment, new dilemmas and consequences are continuously being generated.

Again, this is why brandscapes attempt to play to a state of immediacy and emergency, of imaging the culmination of the 'real' in which everyone can directly participate. As the authors indicate, these projects pile up unintended and un-monumental leftovers, as

well as what Virilio (2007) calls an 'accretion of accidents', where wreckage piles up everywhere. And thus continues the long process of modernity making refuse, where spaces of positivity, 'well-rounded lives', and 'actors with capacities' are attained with the inextricable by-product of wasting others.

As Kuper and AI point out, giving consumers the sense of immediacy, of proximity to 'real intensities' and 'real things', as well as directing design interventions to the level of feeling and affect tries to circumvent the particular complexities of politics now played out over a potentially unwieldy multiplicity of places and institutions. At the same time this sense of 'directness' constitutes a form of mediation between the need to put capitalist knowledge to work to increase accumulation and profit and, at the same time sustain the openness, sympathy, collaboration, and publicity inherent to the 'general intelligence' relied upon by capital to open up new worlds of consumption. But in doing so, this operation may also contribute to the dissipation of particular modalities of representation where populations were stabilized within the ambit of the state and municipality through a deal where they were accorded certain rights in return for their assuming specific responsibilities to the state. In other words, they had the right to be represented by an apparatus which formally committed itself to represent their interests and needs.

But as Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2007) point out, the continuous shifts and radical re-articulations of the trajectories of individual lives affected in post-liberal sovereignty, as well as the substantial relocation of governance to individuals as self-responsible agents, has significantly worn away the capacities of representational bodies to mediate. This is not only a matter of politics being constituted in a more networked system, as Arditì (2003) argues – where there is a constellation of sites for the enactment of the political and the constitution of politics, as well as a sense of regularity in the dispersion of sites of political enunciation. For increasing numbers of urban residents, there exists

no real mediating body that sorts out, regulates, or explains how individual bodies and lives are to be coordinated with each other, how they are to share space, or what their obligations are to each other (Sánchez 2008).

Cities everywhere become the collection of micro-territories that have little to do with each other even if in many respects they share the same fate. Brandscapes engineer a world where bodies could be reached and affected without the cumbersome baggage of representational systems. The autonomy of signs can be operationalized to generate singular impacts on bodies as deterritorialized fields of intervention. Thus, brandscapes contribute to a situation where how bodies interface with other bodies is something that has to be invented on the spot. As result, many of those interactions are increasingly violent, banal, arbitrary, parasitic, or simply just don't take place. How people then are 'sorted out'; how they discover viable practices of determining how they are to be with each other remains largely undecidable.

## THE PATHS AHEAD

So what can be done about such fabricated undecidables? For the majority of the world's urban dwellers, this is a matter of strategy. It is a matter of knowing when and how the relational interdependencies of their lives can be made visible and when things should be kept out of view, or at least known in ways that cannot be easily pinned down. These oscillations require an environment, and as such, the urban built environment comes to support or impede certain strategic potentials.

The reflections of these authors on the volatile relationships among modernities, nations and peoples, images and experiences reaffirm the importance of a process of urbanization long made peripheral to analysis and productive engagement. Too often the

focus on contemporary everyday life and cities limits itself to big developments, vast suburbs or overcrowded slums. But what of those districts that continue to absorb and even support very different ways of life, aspirations and capacities?

While the dense and messy landscapes of these districts may be fast disappearing, cities remain full of intricate conjunctions of times, space, and bodies that demonstrate, even if only metaphorically, the contested yet generative relationships among things not really able to fit together or to do much without each other. People are able to see and experience just how tentative the 'taken for granted' actually is – but at the same time are better able to 'write' their own experiences and experiments into it.

The seemingly haphazard, incomplete and strewn out arrangements of buildings, infrastructure, and activity that continue to persist in many cities provides an important visualization of what people have to deal with in order to make a viable life in the city. They can show how water and power appear and disappear, what bodies and objects manage to get through in order to encapsulate themselves in a sense of individual agendas and aspirations. They show the terrain, conditions, and conjunctions along which the changing projects of people and things try to get along – not always very successfully. It is an environment that cannot be summed up, nor subsumed under a singularly formatted representation or necessity. The navigations of residents trying to engage and disengage, trying to both stabilize and rearrange the conditions in which they situate themselves are not the smooth uninterrupted sailings of fast cars on superhighways.

Rather, they criss-cross and side-step the markings and sediments of many different movements, constituting a place always signaling its availability to deals, small initiatives and grand designs. The intersections of work and home, market and play, open spaces and shadow worlds are intertwined folds along which transverse people, things, waste, resources, services, talk, civilities and tensions,

and shifting pockets of affective intensities and quiet. All entail things ‘stepping’ through and around each other; something evident day in and day out. As many residents in Matete (Kinshasa) or Penjaringan (Jakarta) say, it is a world that can be worked with. And even though the work is hard and sometimes people get nowhere in particular, it is a world where residents feel that they manage to count for something – that there is something indeed to manage.

We know from many places in the world that the absence of infrastructures and mediations do not necessary mean the collapse of social life. Sometimes, people themselves are the important infrastructure. In other words, their selves, situations and bodies bear the responsibility for articulating different locations, resources, and stories into viable opportunities for everyday survival. In cities with few ready-made formats capable of specifying just how individuals are to obtain shelter, food, money, and status, the particularities of an individual’s family and ethnic background, their personal character and style, their location in particular arrangements of residence and circulation with others all become the stuff of shifting circuitries of connection along which pass information, cash, obligations, possibilities, and support. In such an existence, it is difficult for individuals to think of a life for them, to plan a specific trajectory, or to know in advance just what implications a particular course of action might produce.

It is possible to draw lines across these apparently haphazard and improvized urbanities. There can be organizational principles – but what they are and for whom, again, are strategic concerns. There are few overarching necessities capable of compelling strict attention or mass adherence. But this doesn’t mean that the form of the necessary or the form of apparently unmediated need or experience can’t function as a kind of shadow in which many different options and ways of doing things can percolate or hide.

The breaking up of surfaces once counted upon to represent some specific use or

meaning takes on an important role in post-colonial struggles. In other words, depth doesn’t necessarily mean substance, and surface isn’t necessarily condemned to being the facile, ever-shifting vehicle of commodification. For example, Pheng Cheah (1999) has written about the ‘spectral nationality’ that hangs over and haunts peoples of the post-colony. No matter how the course of nationhood in much of the global South has found itself dissipated and fractured by war, indebtedness, exploitation, or nearly comprehensive incorporation in the circuitries of global capital, a dream-image of a way of life whereby a people exceeds the particularities of their local circumstances and relations is concretized in and through nationality as a disembodied techné. Here, the surface of the nation still has use in keeping alive certain aspirations for people being ‘more than they are’. It doesn’t embody, it doesn’t represent – it keeps things open, keeps things from being foreclosed or prematurely wrapped up. If then the spectral is thought to exert real effects, what are the nature of their ‘architectures’ and conditions of existence?

What, then, does a daily living architecture point to? The three contributions here lead us to this question. Especially if the nation is a means of experiencing new kinds of connections among people with whom one shares a city; something more just; something with more space for the majority to not only realize the levels of consumption attainable for a minority but to also make all of the years of living by their wits count for something else.

The existent spatial arrangements and social relations of the city could not themselves constitute the incipient form of such a nation. If one looks at the realities of urban life for the majority of the urban residents in the global South, the conditions that currently exist would hardly nurture hopes and ideas about the nation or the stuff of its materialization. Instead, the present urban realities would make those aspirations ‘dead in the water’ before they had any chance of suggesting a viable way to be realized.

Neither would urban residents go out of their way and risk everything to insist on an all or nothing realization of dreams and ways of doing things that starkly announced themselves to be either antagonistic to the world's dominant models or an alternative to them. If they did so, they would likely experience a kind of 'second defeat'. The first defeat being that the initial hopes that lay behind the initial struggles for independence and nationhood in most instances never really materialized.

Likewise, manifestations of the spectral, this dream of the nation, in the daily practices and arrangements of the 'not-yet-citizens' of the 'real nation' could not simply be placeholders for what is to come. In other words, all of the creative efforts urban residents make to survive in cities and to keep open the possibilities for a better life are neither just compensations for the lack of jobs, services, and livelihoods and neither are they necessarily the kernels of new way of being in the city that simply needs more time, political support and money in order to be realized. Rather, as Cheah (1991) implies, something must be set in motion that addresses the turbulent and uncertain experiences of the present; something that constitutes a reminder of a way of life and being together that could have taken place but did not. Something set in motion that brings about a continuously renovated, flexible and improvised series of tactics that 'look everywhere' for opportunities to take 'things forward'. In other words, there has to be a way to lead people's thoughts, actions and commitments into versions of themselves for which there are not any clear terms of recognition or clear links to the hopes and dreams to which people aspire.

Therefore, the objective for those who continue to aspire to be something more than they are in the present is not to become anything in particular in terms of the prevailing notions about what can be taken account, what makes sense, or what is logically possible. The idea is to keep things open, keep things from becoming too settled or fixed.

The messed up city then is not simply a mess. In the very lack of things seeming settled, people keep open the possibility that something more palatable to their sense of themselves might actually be possible.