

## Seminar 05: Borders and Mobility

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Presentations by: Diego Barajas, Nishat Awan and Phil Langley, in discussion with Doina Petrescu, Kim Trogal, Sam Vardy, James Brown, John Sampson.

### Diego Barajas presentation:

#### DB: Architecture and planning and preservation

- to include not only physical tectonic structures but also soft ones, like social, cultural and spatial ones and forms of life in biological and social sense
- how as architects we can play a role in often fragile and very vulnerable realities: social or natural ecosystems – needs to map and act on them
- different means to construct space other than tectonic ones

Projects where we use these techniques; Cali Gardens project with a biologist, has gardening, exhibition, advertising campaign, ateliers with local people – will show these projects later if we have time – also using soap operas, a project using television strategies or creating a book, which was the Dispersion project.

#### DB: Dispersion

A book is a format that operates in a geographically broad territory but somehow also a bit hermetic—an academic audience. We used a newspaper, a less specialised but broader audience, in the case of this example, we were trying to move certain ideas and images within Rotterdam, to show the very real but hidden face of the belhuis or telephone shop for migrants – as public spaces against the clichés about them in some mass media.

I will mostly refer to a paper called 'Notes on Architecture for Globalised Bodies', a reflection on dispersion, a research particularly focused on transnational and migrant lifestyles.

*Shows 4 images titled: 2am, 12am, 4pm, 11pm*

Images of instances in a belhuis (house of phone calls) in Rotterdam. Used by transnational communities in different cities of the world and have become new collective spaces. Images show belhuis where low technology of the telephone has been replaced years ago by technology of teletransporter globes, free body movement, atmospheres of waiting times, screens of live broadcasts of the homeland and other digital services – translations, electronic basmati rice dispenser etc.

- make use and reinforce relationship between social structures of the different communities of users and the time zones to stimulate what was already existing – changing of atmospheres according to time zones

2 intriguing phenomenon:

- they not only survived but multiplied, even though they are more expensive
- difference between belhuis social structure (usually owned by Pakistanis and Moroccans)
- and other migrant shops (bars, hairdressers) in the city

Dealing 2 key aspects:

- changes in production and consumption logic in the territory and how this affects urbanism and architecture
- problematics of public space in the context of globalisation

Dispersion definition:

A way to inhabit a territory that is no longer contained geographically—is spread out and connected by artificial means. Refers to the relation between globalisation and individualisation.

Role of imagination (Appadurai) in globalised social structures.

*Shows stills from a video made in collaboration with a filmmaker in Madrid.*

Image of a man watching a home video on television: One of the many videos he used to receive from his daughter. Natalia, the girl was living in Toulouis, a small city two hours from Cali, Columbia. Natalia knows very little about Cali but she hears a lot about Madrid, where Harold her father has been working for many years. Harold is illegal so there was no way he could bring his daughter to live with him. So, occasionally they exchange home videos, talk on telephone or talk on web cam in an internet café. Harold regularly transfers money to Columbia, usually transported by transatlantic commuters—a service given in migrant oriented shops.

Even with extreme distance they had managed to live close to each other using new creative ways—in fact they *were* living together. In these situations our bodies are globalised using prosthesis, such as a web cam. Although this is familiar to all of us, the example shown has reached a radical point.

**DB: Cape Verdean example**

The video shows these effects of dispersion at a personal scale, on a national scale it happens as in the case of Cape Verdeans in Rotterdam—it does not destroy but reinforces the Cape Verdean archipelago model. In Rotterdam it is not the ships but the tramlines 4 & 7 that connect hairdressers, travel agencies, hotels, music shops etc. Rotterdam is very important place for

Cape Verdean music; they have their own rhythm, Cabolov. So this is a grass roots globalisation, not about homogenisation but differentiation.

### DB: Dispersion in history

Technologies of the electricity, train, car, etc. have contributed to sprawl and models of decentralisation. Technological advancements and changes in production help to understand the developments in urbanism in that period. City as production machine – not just the hardware but the soft parts of the city, the programme and the flows.

These can be seen in 2 projects by Hilberseimmer: The high-rise city for Berlin and the centralised city for Chicago. In both projects there is a decentralised model at work even if it does not seem so in the beginning. Both use same parameters of performance, one in the vertical and dense, the other horizontal. They are both models that look at relationship between programme and flows and are opposed to the model of satellite cities that were popular then (e.g. Le Corbusier).

The change in relations of production and consumption from Fordist to the 'just-in-time' model (Negri) that requires a deep understanding of the consumers desires. Fordist model had a silent relationship between production and consumption, meaning that a standardised model of goods for a homogenised market on a bounded territory. But in a globalised, individualised territory this does not work anymore. Post-Fordist model – first demand then commodity is produced in a factory, no need for storage but need a high level of seduction to convince the client to order product. This relationship between production and consumption is not based on data but as Negri explains on affects, imaginaries, emotions that are transmitted. A large part of contemporary production is based on immaterial products – create experiences. Even the feelings of the subjects are used, e.g. banks that get their customers young.

So in a fatalistic perspective it seems there is a total immersion of the subject in a consumption machine almost without a way out – can be thought of as the end of the public sphere. But what are the production and consumption processes from below?

### DB: Dispersion in the belhuis

Beck distinguishes globalisation from globalism, Appadurai, globalisation from above to grassroots globalisation. Marginal processes that may show ways to redefine reality and show possibilities and so it is useful to come back to the case of the belhuis. As electricity changed the cities, today other technologies stretch urbanism. Dispersion may be a physical state but is primarily an imaginary one. Different combinations of artificial infrastructures such as web cams, video cameras, etc.

## DB: Belhuis as new glocal public space in the city (Saskia Sassen)

Caboline, owned by a Pakistani (Ijaz) who knew family ties were very strong in Cape Verdean community. He customised a Cape Verdean island for the Cape Verdean community. On entrance, next to flags is the blue sky of Cape Verde.

This physical experience can be imagined as a sort of gas contained in the interior by a particular customer service, by meeting other people, by the light and the spatial decoration, ethnic programmes. Other services were added overtime, that might seem incompatible at first – hairdressers, clothes selling, mobile phones, real estate and internet with videoconference. There is an economic reason for this, subletting to other businesses like a Bollywood video club, to minimise costs. The belhuis is one of the easiest businesses to start running in Holland but also the riskiest. The instability makes these spaces so rich in programme.

Belhuis is a very efficient architectural means to stimulate a mental state of dispersion. The transnational city is structured on a physical level—the waiting space, which Castell calls the ‘space of places’ and the virtual one—the space of flows.

The people get deterritorialised – they are not in Holland anymore.

The devices in the belhuis are not made in the Fordist way with a production line but come from different people and situations, works in a network with high and low technology and modernity and tradition. The decentralisation of the production of these objects also defines their aesthetics.

*Shows diagram of belhuis opening hours and time zones of countries served.*

Shows how virtual infrastructure such as the telephone affects directly the physical space and social structure. Calling hours of certain groups is affected by the time zones of where they are calling. Explains why belhuis are so different from other immigrant services, which are targeted to one group only—an exclusive Chinese belhuis would not survive.

Belhuis becomes an essential interface of territories, physically distant but at same time becomes a new type of physical collective space with a changing character.

## DB: The Belhuis stimulator

The interior environment of the waiting space, the long distance communication of the telephone in the action space at the glocal level. The sense of community does not refer to the bourgeois notion of public space (idealised and totally inclusive of the nation-state) but based on principles of contestation (Nancy Fraser).

The interior is a territory detached from the rest of the city—spatially and temporally. It is able to establish new relations, both local and global. The separation of interior and exterior, the street

and belhuis interior that allows it to become a collective space at the global scale in a new manner—still works as a condenser at the local scale.

The belhuis questions the traditional notion of outside in architecture—it is multi-scale and multi-dimensional, also a psychological territory. The belhuis does not follow the street anymore; in many ways it even denies the space of the street. Its publicness is not established by the dissolution of the physical limit but through the detachment of the street and the confrontation of distance. This is what triggers its crisis and its strength—its publicness and its beauty. The belhuis is public space not as an open cube (as the modernists dreamed of) but as a closed cube. Belhuis is open to another sort of exterior.

Belhuis offers distortion rather than clearness and simulation through flexibility of space, unstable hierarchies of the different agents, by density of programmes and territorialisation generated through architectural means, closer to make up. Decoration becomes functional—to territorialise, to bring someone somewhere else. Here interior design and urban design merge. Interior design customises space, urban design connects large territories.

Collective space in belhuis is closer to public space described by *New Public Space*.

### DB: Bioarchitecture

Takes from Negri's concept of bioproduction—the production of our lives as social beings. The belhuis can be described as bioarchitecture, the relation between space of bioproduction and social space. Researching into the links between the construction of space, production and consumption and particularly the construction of the public sphere. For Negri production lies on the side of the subject and not the object, it is the relationship of values and affects in networks in social production. The subject for him becomes the main object of consumption and of transformation.

Bioarchitecture then refers to the production of space where the final object is the production of the inhabitant and not the building itself. In the case of belhuis it is the infrastructure that is producing this not only through the calling connection but the physical three-dimensional immersion. This immersion was something that Constant did—creating different atmospheres in New Babylon. But the anarchic form of New Babylon doesn't work anymore as the subject is part of the consumption machine

Although the belhuis works within the production/ consumption logic, it promotes new ways of sociability that did not exist before. It has links, spontaneous ways of organisation that contest the status quo and homogenous globalisation. Produces multiple and simultaneous spaces with new social structures.

*Shows images of belhuis interior – waiting space, calling booth, external*

Action, calling space – here you are not in Rotterdam anymore. Here the decoration is not necessary anymore. Then there is the exit space, where the impact of the interior can really be felt. The image of the city that one has is very different from the one before entering, before being stimulated. You can imagine that people who have been in the belhuis will feel differently and may oppose the local forces of absorption of the immigration and integration Dutch policies. Belhuis is more about fruitful co-existence than the politically correct notions of integration.

It stimulates another territory in the city. The urban landscape is destabilised through private mental constructions, so the value of built space is not only functional but emotional. As practical value decreases the emotive value increases – explains why belhuis is still popular even though it is expensive. Belhuis creates homelike atmosphere in which the globalised bodies are immersed – the physical and social contact cannot be replaced by the mobile phone (which is popular for local calls but not those to home country).

The belhuis reveals the close often-intimate links between informal, spontaneous urban phenomenon and the commodity machine. It is in fact a good example of an advanced immersion machine. Show alternative options for ways of production and a renewed discourse on aesthetics for another publicness and the micro and the macro level and also how human relations can be imagined and reconsidered in the space of the global city.

**DB: What tactics strategies urban practice requires to accommodate new dynamics of migration?**

- **Field of operation:** Urban planning as multi-territorial and translocal practice – a new geography of the urban and the collective that comes out of dispersed overlapped territories
- **Means of operation:** New multimedia infrastructures – how they construct new urban and public space. Today different social activities increasingly operate through other infrastructures, both virtual and physical. There are new meeting points in concepts once understood as separate – urbanism and interior design, virtual worlds and public space – need to understand them as interconnected
- **Ways of operation:** The production modes of urban projects – it is necessary to follow these as they give clues to the shift of power and this could be interfered with. Commodity and entrepreneurial flows and self-organised flows – migrant culture is self-organised and participatory. How to become part of the participatory structures and how to preserve these structures? Need to be transdisciplinary.

**DB: Other projects**

Project in Columbia that tries to connect participatory and immersive means in slum areas of Bogota. The houses are small and self-made but they all have very large televisions and watch

soap operas, which are very popular in Latin America. But this popular media is top-down and full of clichés – our project looks at participatory television.

**DP:** It is interesting to see how this vision of a globalised urban approach would translate into architecture. What example you would give – you have mentioned as a conclusion some of the social phenomena, some are translated into social projects like mobs but then do you know some urban projects that are working in this way?

**DB:** For us the belhuis was an architectural, spatial project, there is no distinction between the research and the project. It is a social bio-indicator of the biodiversity of Rotterdam and this is also construction for us.

**DP:** So how do you construct? By mapping and by theorising and by publicising this (the book)?

**DB:** This is one way but it is a bit hermetic. The other way, which is still not enough for me but it was a way in this case to get into the local, to shake some imaginaries. We went on television and to newspapers. The space is already there, it is not about constructing a new one. The Dutch public was saying, these shops are going to disappear in a few years, the younger generation won't use them. In that sense, your question is very important because we need to democratise research – I don't know how to so it but it's a big question for us and a lot of people. To not stay in the academic world – the mass media and architecture today are related to the star architects but there is another way of looking at this. We have a great power with the new media, to go to television etc. but not with the selfish idea of promoting ourselves but getting these other latencies and emergences.

We tried to establish the idea of participatory means – in the belhuis case it is still analysis made by our group...

**DP:** Yes, they haven't participated in the analysis.

**DB:** Exactly, this would be the next stage. Participatory media, radio and television, are useful means to get into the community. Bollywood making could be a good strategy for the Indian community ...

**DP:** My question would be that when you are taking as a model for research self-organised groups and you say, well they are already there, they don't need you as architect to give them any input other than just making there imaginary. The architect is doing research and analysing what is going on, then do they ever need an architect? These people that were the object of your research, do you think that they will need any architectural input from you?

**DB:** In this particular case, there was I think an input for example, they were involved. I had to get into this world for two years, I was in another Rotterdam from the rest of the people. I mean I was

really into the community and people were quite involved I think in the process. In this case there were very particular things, for example the Dutch uses laws are very much against hybrid programmes, so it was a point to discuss. That in order to operate and have the social value that they already have, they need to be multifunctional; you have to keep the hairdresser and the ice-cream seller to have these connections.

The diagrams were useful for the architect, the people themselves make the space perfectly but what they don't do is to visualise it, it was hidden. In Spain, the local Spanish people are connected to the reality of the telephone shops, they enter them but in Holland no one knew about this. And we have to show because if they restrict the law more, they will disappear. So for me as an architect, it is an important way of constructing by preservation.

**DP:** I will come back to this notion of public space because you keep saying that they are public spaces and in fact they are privately owned and so from this point of view they are no better than a café or other privatised public space. But you are arguing that they are public for the people who are using them and they have a public character. But I think we have to pay attention to terminology – do we accept that all public space is private space that works as public? Because then I think that we are destroying the ideal notion of public space, which is useful to work with as an impossible to achieve but still as an aim. And I would call them, as you call them as well, 'collective spaces', which is probably more precise and it is also in transition between private and public.

What we are doing with our projects, they are also collective spaces for the same reason that there is a collective that takes them in charge and manages them and they are not completely open because it is impossible to be completely open. There are many kinds of collective spaces, they can be publicly owned, or collectively owned or privately owned, which is very interesting. In fact a lot of energy in terms of research on self-organisation could be focused in terms of research on these collective spaces rather than working with very abstract and vague notions of public space.

**DB:** I am aware of what you say and it was an important point of discussion during the whole research. I was relying more on certain ideas of public space or public sphere, such as Margaret Crawford – she was looking at how public space was working within private space for women and immigrant groups in the last century. I think it is a big discussion about what is public ...

**DP:** Maybe what you need is just to clarify what idea of public space you are using. That it's the publicness of the private space that interests you. I think that these spaces have a certain specificity, I don't know if I would be interested to go there. They are creating exclusions as well, they are highly specialised in a certain culture or cultures and lifestyles and we should refer always to a radical definition of a public space where everybody can be.

DB: But there were always exclusions. The agora was excluding women.

DP: Yes, but then it is interesting to extract the notion of the public as a public that always excludes and I agree with you on this. The necessity of exclusion in order to exist.

DB: In this case the belhuis is not open to the street as public space is supposed to be. But by this exclusion (Dutch people don't go there), other openness comes because of the time zones. There is a publicness of the belhuis – the phone calls open other spaces – it is another spatial experience that is influenced by other places. So how could you use new media to challenge ideas of the new public sphere.

NA: Appadurai speaks of 'diasporic public sphere', which could be another term to describe them.

DP: This is a term on a non-architect but architects can also challenge the notion of space. Collective space for me is stronger and more political than public space because solidarity makes another politics. You mentioned spatial experience, how by making another spatial experience you can influence the subject to be more political. So it becomes a simulator not only of migration but creates political awareness rather than being trapped in the same thing.

I am interested in the same thing, how by organising spaces with these mixes they become spaces of resubjectivation, where the subject is allowed to change, so the question is how to manage change.

## Nishat Awan and Phil Langley presentation

NA: How global geo-politics reproduces its territories and boundaries/borders within the city-space

- Interrogate what kinds of spaces postcolonial subjectivity creates through looking at patterns of occupation, appropriation and use
- Using Appadurai's concept of 'diasporic public spheres' as places where a connection between 'here' and 'there' is made (there being the place left behind), e.g. cafes, social clubs etc.
- Classically they are conceptualised as interior space. We were interested in how these spaces function when they are not enclosed – hesitate to say public space as it is a contested notion but a space that is not an interior – so what happens when these are not spaces that are hidden, and which can be easily adapted and customised?  
(Diaspora – the dispersion of a people from their original homeland)
- So what happens when these spaces overlap, interested in the proximity of various groups and the shifting boundaries and edges between them – conceptualising these as spaces the place where the negotiation of everyday life takes place

### NA: Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the territorial impulse

- Deleuze & Guattari speak of 'the refrain' – birds using song to mark their territory
- And they speak of the primal need of all animals for a territory, a space, including humans – their use of analogy of the refrain gives it a rhythmic quality that seems well suited to speaking of everyday life's rhythm.
- Also brings the idea of territorialisation and deterritorialisation – that there is continual flux and not a static situation

### NA: The space of the street as micro-territory

- Mapped a single street in north-east London, conceptualising it as a series of overlapping and shifting micro-territories that create their own borders and boundaries
- The idea that a territory, in this case, is a corporeal, bodily territory that envelops you and moves around with you
- The street has predominantly Turkish/Kurdish businesses/services and we're interested in how the politics of the home left behind effects their spatial politics in London, on that street?

### NA: Mapping territory through walking

- Went for walks with different people and asked them to show which shops/services they used, which spaces on the street they frequented
- Predicated on the idea that where you go is very much dependant on who you are and who you're with
- Also uses Stalker's idea of walking as a way of 'actuating space' – of bringing space into being
- This kind of mapping has also been done by GPS, using it to record people's trajectories and this is also a critique of this technique, which is very personal but also in its extreme accuracy ends up being very inaccurate. Most GPS receivers measure to a tolerance of 1.5-2m, which is the width of a Victorian pavement in London – it's the difference between being inside or outside.

### PL: Artificial neural networks / fallacy of precision

- How to map info that is very personal and complex but on surface looks very simple
- the understanding of neural processes themselves is, all things considered, quite extensive. however...
- research in this field typically stumbles upon 'classical' scientific notions of 'experimentation' which require testing and results and conclusions - interesting to note the deviation here from even simple understandings of neural processes

- an example of this is T. Kohonen, a pioneer in the development of artificial neural networks – the self-organising map, his most significant contribution, creates a very simple system capable of complex behaviour [arguably the defining characteristic of neural systems]. Capable of negotiating between multiple instances of high dimensional inputs, the technique is almost exclusively used in order to classify inputs.
- But network only maps the information, not the classification as in traditional cartography. So it is a relational map, you can't remove one thing without altering the whole. It maps points in space and then elevates them for time.

NA: Shows physical space in x and y-axis, z is time.

- 3 walks – with a Turkish waiter, who worked in a local café and moved to the area a few months ago
- A Kurdish woman who works at a local community centre and has been living in the area for seven years
- A man who works at a social club but does not live in the area
- Just went for a walk with and had an informal conversation – where they went, when, how often, any anecdotes they may have etc.

DB: So, it's a personal map, not a map of the street.

PL: The green is the output of the neural network and below is a traditional map of the street.

DP: So what you can see is where there are intensities. Can you find some patterns in it? How it relates to the realities?

Territories is an interesting concept, usually used in architecture around sensitive political contexts, Israel/Palestine and the land territories in Belfast and also in Turkey. Here you are bringing the concept to a situation where territories are overlapping and it is flattening. Interesting what you are doing with information, do you interpret it back politically?

NA: There are two steps: reading stories back into the maps and also overlaying them for comparison.

PL: Rather than having a crude description or necessarily looking for significances, it is a means of mapping territory.

DP: What for you is the main goal?

NA: Privileging another way of seeing the city, about how to collect information unobtrusively and to question the normal way of planning. The overlapping of the maps could reveal opportunities – at a certain time in a certain place something could happen.

DB: So an unexpected factor...

DP: So it's about finding the unexpected – extracting and abstracting information without keeping all the complexity of the first hand information – a bit like Space Syntax but more personal.

You have mentioned Deleuze and Guattari and the theory of territory. It would be interesting to see if they mention a behaviouralist or naturalist when they speak of animal territories. It's a way of looking at territories that is not political but life or bio-territories – more related to everyday life.

SV: It can speak of autonomy and is political, it could be used in different ways.

DB: It does not show the atmosphere of the street, this could be added using other ways of representing. Film maybe?

DP: Yes, the images that you have shown (DB) show the importance of atmosphere and you have chosen to show this through images and collage of the space.

DB: You can represent space in different ways but it is dependant on what you want to find. Is there a hypothesis? Or what are you aiming for – in order not to get lost in the information. Why is the street so fascinating? If there is something that excites you about it, then it can be really powerful.

NA: It is special, there are lots of different groups there, it is not yet gentrified ...

DP: But in terms of postcolonial space, there is a conflict. The Turkish and the Kurdish population and how conflict is a part of diasporic space.

DB: So the street is also like a weapon? Conflict from another space is there.

NA: Yes, the Kurdish community organises marches to protest against events in Turkey and it happens intermittently whenever a major event happens over there.

DP: This needs to be mapped as well. It could be the subject for another set of interviews.