
notes on space

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Note 6:

Frantically looking for spaces to dance.

The last Mextropoli edition (2017), city and architecture festival, was devoted to the topic possible futures. Here I speak and look a little bit further into one of the conferences. Marina Garcés, the speaker, started thinking around her presence and participation in such festival and discussion as a philosopher and essayist. She started by shooting questions to the world that was being discussed that day, how to do? how to undo? how to build? how to rebuild? She was very keen on speaking about what she called a “time kidnapping” which ended up generating an idea of expropriation of the collective subject and its capacity to make world, of reappropriating time and space, and somehow blinding and muting cartographies that leave the subject without the feeling of the possible. Personal and collective chronologies without future due to a failure in the articulation of the possible, that contrary to a subjectivity production that gains time, that somehow locates beyond a horizon that is not offering or allowing much, are paralyzed to a sensation of irreversibility, where more than time of action there’s a sensation of discount time, not only counting, but counting -until when-. (Garcés 2017)

Adding up to the questions she shot at the very beginning, I would also suggest a where from, summed to all the how’s. Where from and how to build, unbuild, make,

unmake, order, reorder, far beyond the shapes and forms of normative horizons. Where from to rearrange? Also, I find a particular interest in this “time kidnapping” as for it could bring forth a discussion with Doreen Massey’s continuous effort and will along her text to separate the notion of representation (that carries along with it the idea of dead and fixed) that has been attributed to space throughout the years, accusing it precisely of kidnapping time; she traces that relation (which is part of our engrained imagination) passing through Bergson and de Certeau, as well as approaches within science and their treatment and understanding of space (not to keep on with the discussion but just mentioning it as side note). However, Garcés is at any moment referring or accusing space of kidnapping anything, actually, she never talks about space as such, but in the particular context of the conference it ends up being a very spatial reflection, and a reflection where I think, she was space-time speaking, never separate.

“For Space” sets three main propositions for the imagination:

“First, space as a product of interrelations, as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global, to the intimately tiny. Second, space as the sphere of possibility of the existence of multiplicity; as the sphere in which different trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity. If space is indeed the product of interrelations, then it must be predicated upon the existence of plurality. Multiplicity and space as co- constitutive. Third, the recognition of space as always under construction. Always in the process of being made. It is never finished, never closed.” (Massey 2002: 9)

Space formed by becomings. I pretty much am for a space more complex than the simplifications from which Massey tries to rescue it, her propositions make it much more exiting, unflattened, thick, spongy, biteable, more prone to finding ourselves as conformations, connections, connectors, fireworks, (you name it) than somehow placed in this somewhere where we ended up being, and from which we think we can do anything without a minimum amount of respect. But here I would also suggest an incision, or maybe a deepening. I don’t know if she thought of it, I suppose there are hints, but from what I read I couldn’t grasp a full notion of it. I felt she spoke of us, us each person, more like a block, I mean a body block that is a myriad of stories and a

myriad of possibles and not possibles, trajectories, which definitely differs from an unanimated block. But still, not a region of itself that is other regions as well, most accurately I couldn't find the loop of that relation. But maybe I am also forcing it here.

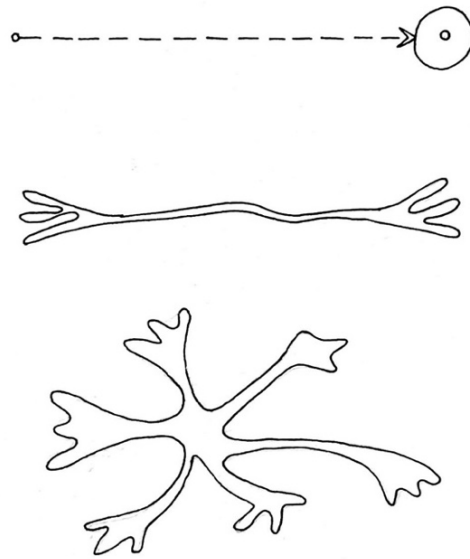
Probably, the reason I'm having trouble with the last paragraph is because I'm trying to fit in it developed complexities from which Arakawa and Gins write, and speak, and build, etc. And I am trying to bring forth the body itself. "Born into a new territory, and that territory is myself as an organism." (2002: 1) The organism from which they talk (that is us) 'persons' the world, a verb, many personings in succession sum up a person. Referring to a person as an organism that persons highlights an intermittent and transitory outcome brought up of coordinating forming, rather than a preformed closed unit. The apportioning, the world under construction begins in that born new territory, a territory that is myself, 'were nothing being apportioned out, no world could form'. A landing site is a taking note of, some sort of greeting sites. "A person parces the world at any given instant into particular distributions of landing sites. Or better. An organism-person-environment can be parsed into these distributions." (2002: 16)

Arakawa and Gins provided an unprecedented description and arrangement of the complexity of that which we call space. They turn towards the architecture of the built world as a terribly great aid to critical thinking. I myself am fond of this thinking, especially when it comes to building and thinking more seriously, deadly serious I would say, about what is being built, why and how, what for, and where from, being extremely questioning, all the questions that can be asked. Taking it to an extreme that may not seem pretty lucid or logical, but how else could they have done what they did? They were not only questioning the building, they were thinking about not dying, ways to elude death through the way we relate to this sphere we inhabit, it was far beyond (of course, including them, or thinking about them in extensions) constructive policies. But I would add, thinking about constructing policies, it seems we are building towards death, in the most literal sense. Take Grenfell Tower, take the bridges in Italy, take the new buildings that fell in the quake in Mexico City, take the examples, take the many more examples, take not only the clearly disastrous, take the infimal space granted in the 'coffin cubicles' in Hong Kong (the name says it all), take the housing crisis kicking everybody out, take the silent biodiversity loss. These are not abstract thoughts at all, these are the clearest of examples of our current relationship towards space. But, built,

thrown, trophies, golden crowns, what should we do with all that we cannot hold? Not enough is being asked, and yes, I agree with Arakawa and Gins, not enough is being built to incite, to provoke, to tickle questionings, to tickle life.

Garcés speaks of broken relationship with a future that is often presented as gloomy and threatening, but most of all as that which we have no inference in, no relation, no decision. As an out there, as if that which is the only possible thing to happen could be pointed out with one finger. “When you think of the “future” today, you don’t think beyond the year 2050” (Gessen, 2018) Now, I don’t want this to sound as a mere lamentation, because despair and despondency create a loop and mood of their own that I really want to avoid right now. Features (and collections of them) of the world we inhabit are vanishing, from coral reefs to species to stories crushed by wars and fixed ideas. Features that some many organism persons cherish deeply. Life understood under a single way of understanding it may be threatened. But that doesn’t mean that life itself is finding a closure. With or without us and the shape of us that we call ourselves life will keep on going, spinning, bending, wallowing. However, that does not mean (at all) we should just be spectators, or ferocious actors of the vanishing. That’s what Marina Garcés is heading to throughout the entire conference, not adopting this world giving what it seems to be now for granted. Do not assume it to be so. Do not accept ‘geographies of produced death’ as if they were just so. Do not build towards that imminent and promised horizon of all things and all life unanimated.

Replacing the idea of single universal story by a vision of instantaneity of interconnections replaces a single history with no history, disappearing the front, and the back, and the sides. Replacing a single history with many, simultaneous many, which rather than disappearing the possibility of connecting continuums allows for reorientations. It’s not like we are not stepping further, we are continuously going, but we are not changing course, the panorama seems to be frightening, the panorama seems to have vanished. Lights off but one light. One could do well doubting that single light and looking for all the other holes that provide, and one might as well find lots of others in many more directions and the many more holes. We are not, not made of world. We do not, not produce world. But what kind of world are we producing?



“Christian Norberg-Schulz’s diagram in *Existence, Space, and Architecture* (1971). On the right is a place, a home, circumscribed and bounded off. In the middle, a dashed path with an arrow at one end shows movement oriented by and toward this destination. This place, - Heidegger’s temple or hut perhaps - represents, for Norberg Schulz and the conservative tradition of the architectural interpretation of phenomenology, an imagined primitivity. It is a lost paradise authentically organized around a centre. It also signifies a projected future wholeness, a place in which we, as individuals and collectives, are at home and to which a proper phenomenological attitude might attune us. But what are the smaller circles on the left and inscribed in the centre of the right? They are the presupposition on which the coherence of the entire diagram rests. They are not empty markers, but rather signifiers of a particular conception of subjectivity - a universal, transcendental subject on the left and an externalized re-representation of himself at the centre of place on the right. These two marks are made whole by the dotted, and thus provisional, path along which subjectivity orients

towards its home. This is a diagram for a kind of embodiment, a way of being in the world, for whom the orientation of self and the order of the world align. Édouard Glissant’s diagram of the middle passage in the first pages of his *Poetics of Relation* (1990) looks different. The path is unified, and the ends are frayed. The land represents forced travel across the abyss of the Atlantic Ocean in the belly of the slave ship. Tendrils at each end spread out across the lands of Africa to the east and the plantations of the Caribbean and the Americas to the west. This is an identity “linked not to a creation of the world but to the conscious and contradictory experience of contracts among cultures,” founded upon the chaos of relations, circulated along paths across territories, and giving “on-and-with” the land rather than grasping it.” (Norwood 2018: 11)

I passed on the quote and the first two diagrams to a friend of mine, I made an emphasis on the notion of how each of them was a “kind of embodiment, a way of being in the world”. She returned the drawing of the last diagram. And I mean, it made sense.

The thing with space here is that I think that the flat out there reinforces pointing fingers and definite spots. Thinking about it as a possible, as something in formation, as a never finished, does not allow crushing narratives to take up the land. From here to there a million more. Reversible manoeuvres, leaks of all kinds. I also think that an open space, inhabited multiplicity, inhabited multiversality, asks somethings different from us. If space is open, shouldn't we be open too? Fixed and frightened forms. Beginnings and endings. But that's precisely pointing fingers. The - this is it that I am - can be unmade far beyond the notion of the self that we claim to be. "Unforeseen alliances, orientations towards more expansive affective connections to a lively world." (Stark 2017) After all, imaginary lines and regions can change coordinates -after all it is just as arbitrary and therefore no more 'true' than any other way of expressing direction-

Where from and how to build, unmake, rearrange leaking possibilities that support deviations that gain time. Gaining time thought in a sense of reversibility of itself and the possibility of acting on it. "You walk into a building and you find a purposeful guess."

(The built world floats!)

If space is broken/unfold, it generates a "liberation" / "multiplication". But space is inherently broken, multiplied. When the bubble of ecstasity is broken, the subject breaks too, and a new subjectivity production is gained in order to explain and understand what broke, which is also an - other -. The subject brings forth / makes world, in a sort of won battle against real estate, enthusiasts of urban monoculture, little tolerance, and static space. It is also pertinent to say this rupture may not be comfortable or wished for, we may induce ruptures, we may help induce them, but it may also just break, there's much more that can act without us being imbued in it.

The earth just spins, and the sea just rolls, and cosmic time is not counting on us.

Tamed, artificial staticity (that isn't even actually really static). Cracking notions, bending and slicing from the personal to the collective. Making (reactivating an active imagination) *espace valise* (in reference to *mot valise*, from Deleuze and Guattari), to gain time and space, spaces that allow the subject to unfold to make world, spaces that do not suppress that world, that allow connections, overlappings, and diffusion to occur. "A space of loose ends and missing links. For the future to be open, space must be open too."

Capturing space-time. Clipping the wings of a butterfly.

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