BLACK SWAN SPACES

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"Is it not the confrontation with the unexpected which makes the city such an exciting place?"[1]

Ecosystem Patterns

There is a long history of making parallels with nature in an urban context. These relations usually transfer the logic of nature into the built environment by copying aesthetic patterns or searching for semiotics. Vast amounts of utopist thought perceive the city as an organism, constantly finding metaphors and looking for better infrastructural features of modern urban conglomerations.

Efforts to examine the city through its performability are particularly common in the sphere of urban planners that "predict" urban development based on economic and demographic growth. These efforts often ignore spaces that have been arranged as a set of unpredictable situations and mutations in conventional urban development. Is it possible to read the city by using the powerful symbol of the "Black Swan" phenomena?

Black Swan Spaces are created outside of a planner's radar. They are unexpected, indeterminate, and have no official function or program. They are marginal territories, niches for resistance characters, destinations for those who refuse the totalitarian nature of planning and urban politics.

Black Swan Spaces, as black swans themselves, have their own aesthetic qualities—they are not simply spatial anomalies, especially when we look into their socio-political meaning. Ignored by elites and forgotten by citizens, those "more then gaps" in urban development generate new cultural values, unknown to common anthropological studies.

How and Why Do Black Swan Spaces Appear?

First of all, the inability of urban planners to quickly respond to processes such as stagnation or recession, demographic turbulence, new climate realities, and increasing armed conflicts, can be understood as a starting point for the configuration of Black Swan Spaces. Secondly, the current egocentric position of architects as central figures in building processes (near Pop stars, hence the emergence of the term "starchitect"), and the entirely different and difficult reality in which the role of the architect is marginalized and manipulated contribute to the growth of so-called architecture without architects. Finally, the human factor itself and behavior patterns developed from simple rules (like in John Conway's Game of Life) define models of urban evolution. These are spaces that have been born without being planned, spaces that die without a decision to demolish them, spaces that survive radical changes in their environment by adopting new rules.

Given that networks generate today's dominant organizational patterns, Black Swan Spaces exist in a state of tension. The transnational character of resistance contributes to this debate; grassroots activism and micro-politics went far beyond the concept of community gardens and materialize in entirely different cultural settings using the advantages of the blogosphere.

Not necessarily the product of urban failure, Black Swan Spaces should not be confused with ordinary shifts in an architectural program or space recycling concepts that turn post-industrial landscapes into clusters of knowledge production; their creation is unforeseen, has no clear scientific explanation, and involve a wide spectrum of factors.

1. Kenny Cupers and Markus Miessen, *Spaces of Uncertainty* (Wuppertal: Müller + Busmann, 2002).