

Lines and Frames: Architecture in a Period of Migration

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Abstract

The current state of growing uncertainty, instability and change in the current world has rendered our spatial perceptions blurred, fragmented and contradictory. In a period of substantial geopolitical crisis, uneven economic distribution, and climate change, with a growing number of people in a state of transit from poor and war-torn countries to more prosperous parts of the world, we can hardly talk about stable forms in a social and physical sense. But what are the forms and spatial patterns of the world during a period of continuous change? Could a certain depth structure be recognized in the contemporary dynamic of social and spatial transformation? Starting from the basic structure of human perception, and the basic spatial patterns such as center, line and domain, we shall attempt to derive the defined forms, not just as a form of representation but also as a form of action in the contemporary world. The aim of this chapter is to explore the connection between physical and social change; firstly through the elicitation of the defined forms of representation; and, secondly through an ability to act through them. Through a series of examples of hybrid spatial and social situations, we shall map the effectiveness of the defined spatial forms as strategies of transformation in different contexts in the world. As such, the line and the frame as opposing forms, act as the representation of the condition of change, but additionally as an opportunity for a new formal structure in the period of migration.

Keywords: line, frame, square, transformation, non-figurative architecture, migration.

Introduction

In a period of substantial geopolitical crisis, uneven economic distribution, and climate change, we can hardly talk about stable forms in a social and physical sense. We are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. An unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world have been forced from their homes. Among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. There are also 10 million stateless people who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement. In a world where nearly 34,000 people are forcibly displaced every day as a result of conflict or persecution (UNHCR, 2017).

But what are the forms and spatial patterns of the world during this state of continuous change? Could a certain depth structure be recognized in the contemporary dynamic of social and spatial transformation? The form of inhabitation incorporates the physical structure, spatial configurations and the social structure. Housing is defined as a process and an artifact, as a way of living and its physical imprint. Different cultures in different conditions project different types of housing (Rapoport, 1969). They have different types of expression and a different investment in physical, material and meaningful, symbolic structures. This is why in extremely unstable, insecure and shifting conditions, the question of the form of inhabitation is important in recognizing, understanding and practicing the typologies of housing as well as distinct socio-cultural contexts.

Christian Norberg Schultz has pointed out the archetypical conditions of behavior in space, which he connected to the psycho-physical dealings of man (Norberg Schultz, 1985). In his eyes, existence is the establishing of a meaningful relationship between man and a given environment. This relationship is represented, firstly by the act of, “identification”, belonging to a certain place, the determination of the world and secondly by the act of “orientation”, the ability to move through the world. Therefore, the dialectics of the place and the path of departure and return, is essential in any existential space. He defined the basic schemes of spatial orientation as the “center”, “path” and “domain” (surface). But what happens in the periods of change, in extreme social, cultural and spatial conditions? How will these basic spatial schemes express themselves as the exclusive results of changed conditions?

In the conditions of evermore intensive migrations, resettling from the crisis ridden areas to the more stable regions of the world and when an ever-growing number of emigrants are moving from east to west, from south to north, from Africa and Asia to Europe, the changes in the social and spatial conditions of the world are expressed in

the most direct way (Figure 1). These are movements along certain corridors, certain geographical lines which have the best economy of motion and through which the emigrants penetrate into Europe. In the same way, the transit countries which are attempting to stop these motions are using lines of exclusion, such as barriers, fences and walls, as well as exclusion zones, surfaces and frames as temporary stopping points for migrants. So, in a dramatic way, we are back to the main geometrical characteristics and schemes of the organization of space. Hence, in the metastable contemporary world, things with their historic occurrences are neither surpassed nor do their boundaries disappear, but they occur in different ways in the new reality. How can we today recognize the lines and frames as the main organizational form and use them in architectonic projects? In several episodes, we shall show a different interpretation of the line and surfaces in different urban - rural contexts.



Figure 1: A columns of migrants moves along the path in Rigonce, Slovenia, in October, 2015.

It is exactly the unequal development, the unequal distribution of goods and resources that are the source of geopolitical polarization, militarization, and the uncontrolled motion of people. What should have been overcome a long time ago, becomes the basis of our world. The simultaneously uneven geographic development caused opposing motions of neo-liberalism with a number of possibilities and barriers in looking for alternatives (Harvey, 2006, pp. 69-116).

Sequences of Inhabitation, Figures of Exclusion

In critical situations forms of inhabitation are to be understood as dynamic sequences. The migrant crisis became a context through which we could unfold conflicting settlement procedures. The recent wave of migrants reconsiders Europe in many essential aspects; social, cultural, and spatial. A particular segment of migrant flow, currently known as the Balkan Route, dramatically sets elementary human values. The Balkan route covers the period 2014-2016, although informally as a line of refugees and migrants it is not a new phenomenon, but in the summer of 2015 with the escalation of the wave of migrants this has been transformed into a formalized corridor (Bez nec, Speer, Stojić Mitrović, 2016).

The Balkan Route, 2014-2016

The Balkan route was the only channel which allowed migrant inflow into Europe, it is estimated that nearly 800,000 migrants have passed through this route. The route consists of sequences of an array of countries from Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia to Slovenia, as transit countries (bridge countries), as opposed to destination countries, primarily Germany. In the initial period the route continued from Serbia to Hungary, but because of the militarization of the southern border of Hungary, the route was redirected to Croatia and Slovenia (Figure 2).



Figure 2: The Balkan Route, 2014-2016. / Source: Eurostat, Frontex.

With regard to the form of inhabitation in an intensive migration period, we can differentiate certain models throughout the flow. The differentiation of the migrant wave is best understood as the unfolding of two parallel processes: (1) the evolving population structure of the migrant population; and (2) the gradual replacement of criminal mechanisms of migration with government mechanisms (Mandić, 2017).

Migrant structure is transformed in a few crucial phases: social, economic, gender and age structure changes from a well-educated majority of young men to a poorer, less educated majority of women, children and the elderly; the ethnic/national ratios evolved from different nations to only three source nations: Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan; traveling units evolved from individuals and couples to groups of five to fifteen; transport transformed from illegal movement toward government-sponsored transportation; as the speed of migration accelerated.

Consequently, the forms of inhabitations should look at the stages of this dynamic process. If the first phase is assimilated to existing physical structures of urban and rural situations in informal illegal camps or "safe" houses. Reports indicate the two villages, Lojane and Vaksince on the northern border of the Republic of Macedonia, led by illegal structures. In the second phase there were sequences of movement, from the camp in Gevgelija on the border with Greece, to the camp in Tabanovce on the border with Serbia.

The transformation of the patterns of movement reflect the speed, from five to fifteen days in an informal illegal flow, up to 24 hours in the corridor formalized by the introduction of 72-hour document for transit through Macedonia.

72-hour city: Thus the whole system turned into a certain paradigm of movement: the camp in Gevgelija, the organized rail transport from the southern to the northern border and camp in Tabanovce. Thus the forms of settlement were a sequences of this mass movement as places to stop and the line of travel, a sort of "72-hour city".

The experience of the Balkan corridor as the most direct way set patterns of inhabitation within the mass movement as basic schemas of *paths and goals*. The basic sequences that are a fragmented and reduced practice of inhabitation can be seen in the various situations in which the usual spatial syntax of human habitats is composed. We will adopt the line and the square (the frame) as basic spatial images, extracted from the basic schemes of spatial orientation, the path and the goal. Through several different historical episodes and spatial situations, we will reconstruct their phenomenon as exclusive figures of settlement and organization.

A Line

A line is length without breadth (Pickering, 2010/1847). A line's character depends on the interpretation of this geometrical characteristic. Lines are symbolic and concrete organizational forms of the new modern times. In several key positions, we shall consider the genesis and the modes of their interpretation.

Architecture as a part of the modern movement accepted the consequent stage of production. The practices of Taylorism and Fordism were proposed as models for the regeneration of architecture and society (Hill, 2003; McLeod, 1983). Architecture should be seen as a means of dissolving the existing needs of people at different levels and their massive application. To that effect, the line of connection, or the line of production in both a conceptual and concrete sense as a line of machines and workers in a factory with a product that moves along while it is being built or produced became the main organizational model of space. The use of an assembly line reduced the assembly of cars from 12 hours to 93 minutes. The increase in the speed of assembly meant faster availability, giving an impetus to the American car culture as well as an increase in the mobility of society (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Workers on an assembly line at the Ford Motor Co.'s Highland Park. The use of an assembly line reduced the assembly of cars from 12 hours to 93 minutes. Retrieved from http://www.cleveland.com/business/index.ssf/2012/07/minimum_wage_hike.html

The line as a continuous action is an expression of the modern paradigm, both of production and the social and spatial organization. We are following the spatial approximation of production models in a number of anthological examples, namely architecture as an infrastructure in the proposals for the city-viaduct by Le Corbusier. These showed the idea of the line in a most suggestive way, as a pluralistic infrastructure, as a dialogue between architecture and theory, and as a programmatic layering of parallel bands.

In the 1930s, ideas about the linear form of the city developed as extreme scenarios in respect to their structure and position. Le Corbusier proposed a model of the city arising from the logic of traffic infrastructure, a city-viaduct, on two challenging locations, namely Rio de Janeiro (1929) and Alger (1930-33) (Frampton, 1985/1980, Frampton, 2001) (Figure 3).

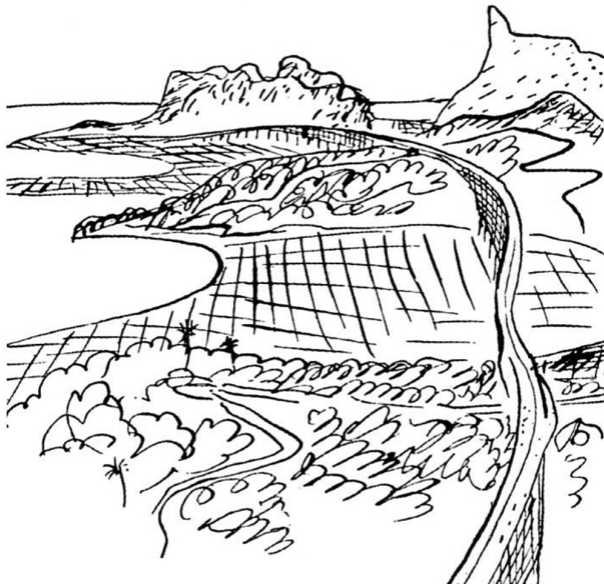


Figure 3: Le Corbusier, A city-viaduct against the dramatic background of Rio de Janeiro, 1930.
Source: Tossiaki Oba, 2015.

In the drawings of the city-viaduct, we see a wavy line that penetrates into or is layered and juxtaposed in relation to the landscape. The theme of the linear form is derived through the direct relationship between architecture and territory. The territory and its environment is not only a background, nor is it simply a system in which architecture dissolves, but the actual material of the architecture that it modifies or

governs. In their sensual play, the play of the line and the ground, we may refer to the eroticized lines of the Le Corbusier's drawings of female figures from this period (Figure 4).

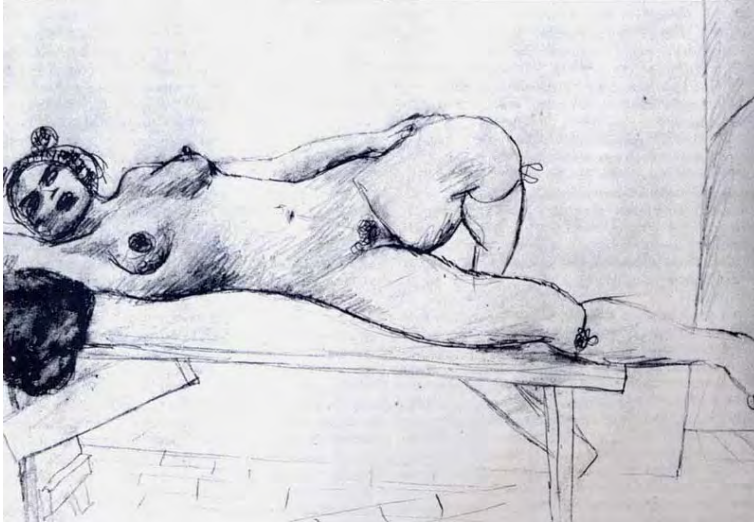


Figure 4: Le Corbusier, female nude. Alger, 1931. Source: McLeod, 1998, p. 500.

But behind the modernization of a territory, a colonial mission of transformation and integration can be found, through which, in the case of Algeria, the French rule, of not just Algeria but the entire continent will be established (Çelik, 1992). In several of Le Corbusier's drawings a spatial axis which from Europe continues to Africa is represented, connecting France through the Mediterranean to Algeria (Figure 5). Along this axis, tall structures are distributed, which are meant to unify Greater France through novel architecture and urbanism. So the meaning of the axis as a linear distribution of new architectural transformation confirms the colonial discourse as an affirmation of the mission of civilization (*mission civilisatrice*).

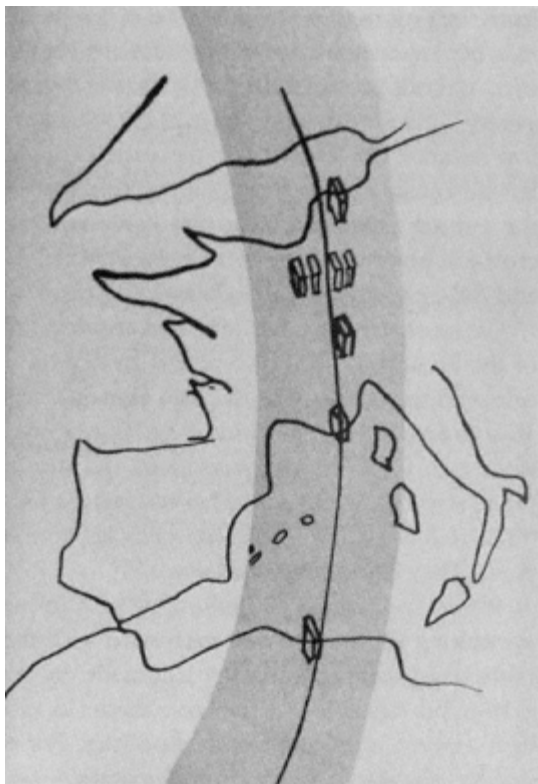


Figure 5: Le Corbusier, diagrammatic maps showing geographical axis between France and Algiers. Source: Çelik, 1992, pp. 58-77.

In the “Bull” series of 1946, Picasso demonstrated how the entirety of the presentation of the bull is reduced to just a continuous linear gesture. Through 12 lithographs of one and the same object of presentation, he shows the development of a piece of art from academic to abstract level. In the series of presentations, Picasso sets apart the image of the bull to disclose its essential presence through a progressive analysis of its form. Each sheet is a successive level of research toward expressing the spirit of the presentation by reducing the drawing. In the final presentation, Picasso reduces the bull to a simple contour (Figure 6). However, while the line resulting from progressive reduction and showing the essence of the presentation fascinates and captivates us, the entirety of the body with all the brutalities and attractions of its animal energy is lost and missing.

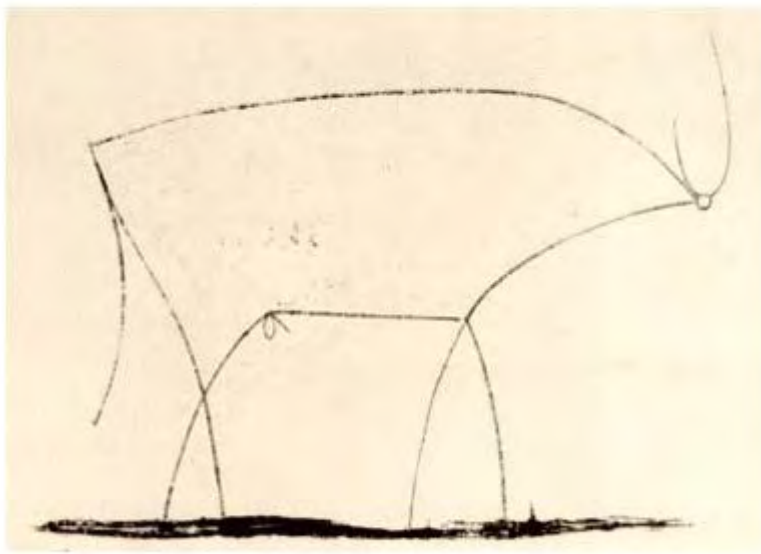


Figure 6: Pablo Picasso, 'Bull - plate 11', January 17, 1946 (lithograph). / Source: Pablo Picasso – Bull: A Master Class in Abstraction. Retrieved from http://www.artfactory.com/art_appreciation/animals_in_art/pablo_picasso.htm

A Square

In geometry, a square is a flat, two-dimensional geometrical figure with four equal sides and four straight angles. It represents a certain surface extracted from its environment, and is described as closeness, exclusion, surrounding, and confinement; something which is projected upon something else, something that needs protection, framing and closing. Therefore, through a square, through its frame, different spatial and social conformations are conveyed. The square is a window of imaginary utopic visions or an example of different spatial, social experiments.

The figure of the sanctuary of Asklepios Soter in Pergamon is constructed as a basic frame, a square and supplement, upgrade or ingrade, as a type of mechanism, or instrument of healing and protection (Figure 7). We can connect the term apparatus (*apparecchio*) as a means or an instrument for unfolding the events (Rossi, 1981). This exclusivity of the frame and the surface will remain in any further interpretation.

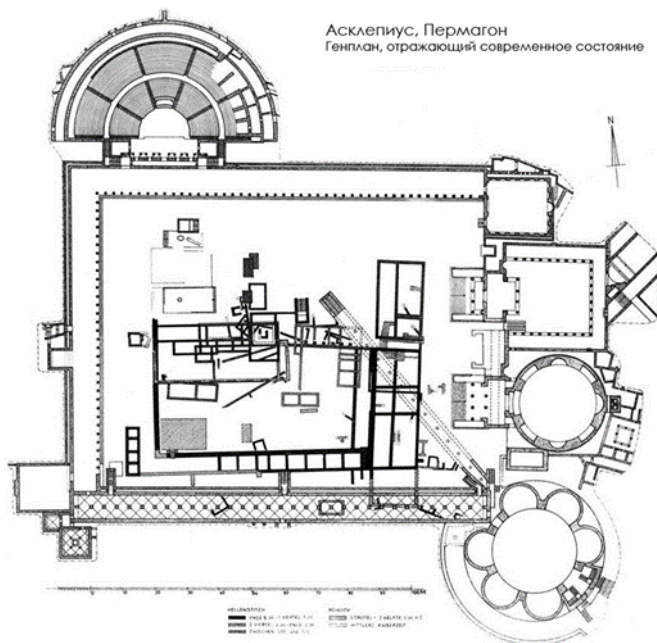
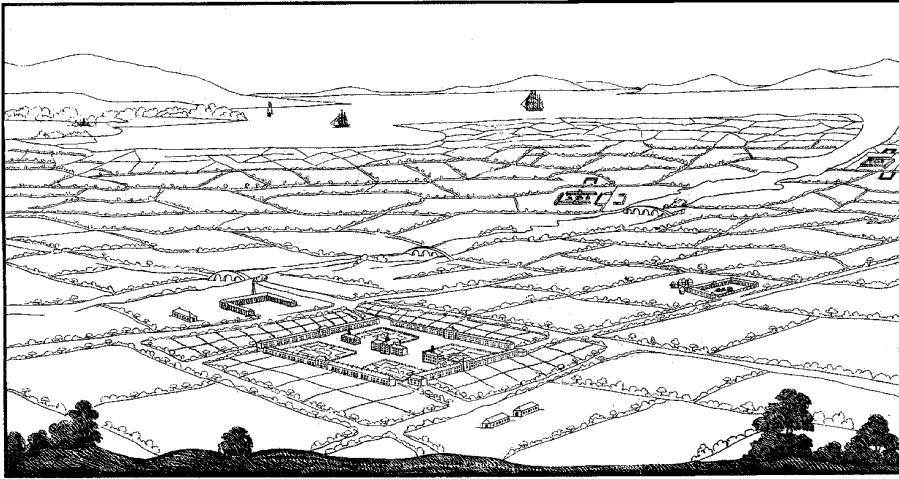


Figure 7: The sanctuary of Asclepius Soter at Pergamon. / Source: Sanctuary of Asclepius. Retrieved from <http://kannelura.info/?p=1317>

The projection of the “society of equality” by Robert Owen in spatial interpretation is in the ideal figure, the square (Figure 8). Robert Owen believed that in the forming of the character of man, the key influence is the environment. Therefore it is necessary for new generations to be placed in a better and superior environment (Owen, 1920). From 1816, Robert Owen elaborated the concept of new types of communities of 500 to 1,500 individuals, with a balanced combination of agriculture and production in the form of a large square. Traditional practices of collaboration in rural agriculture are now provided by a modern and rational spatial frame.



A VIEW & PLAN OF THE VILLAGES OF UNITY & MUTUAL CO-OPERATION.
 DESCRIBED IN MR OWEN'S REPORT ON THE POOR. 1817

Figure 8: Robert Owen (1817). Plan for Villages of Unity and Mutual Cooperation. A New View of Society. / Source: Robert Owen: The Delicious Dream of the Future. Retrieved from <http://specialcollections.vassar.edu/exhibit-highlights/2006-2010/owen/communities.html>

The relationship between geometry and the geopolitical landscape is shown in a very explicit way in the project entitled 'The City of Refugees', *Cité de Refuge* (Office, Geers & Van Severen, 2007) (Figure 9). The project expresses the polarized condition of the border zone between Ceuta and Tangier, between Spain and Morocco, between Europe and Africa. A square of 483x483m is interpolated in the no man's land, as a frame constructed from a colonnade structure. Inside the perimeter are all the infrastructural and program elements of a border crossing. The space inside is left free, without a predetermined program. In this way, through an extreme scenario the contradiction of this border is expressed, but at the same time, the project explores the city, the form of inhabitation in most radical and concise form as a conceived deed, a political decision (Office, Green, Van Severen, 2007).

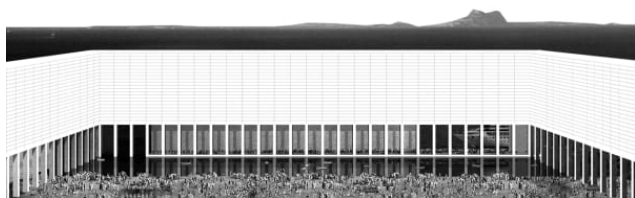
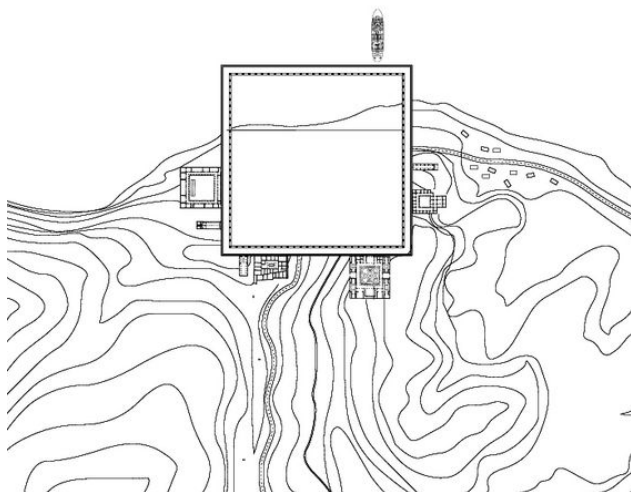


Figure 9: Office Kersten Geers David Van Severen, (2007). Cité de Réfuge. / Source: Office, Geers, Van Severen, 2007.

In 1915 Kazimir Malevich represented the “Black Square” in the “Last Futuristic Exhibition of Paintings 0.10”, in Petrograd. The painting of a “Black Square” was a twist towards non-objective painting, the prevailing interpretation of the realistic appearance of reality. This was an icon of the theory of non-objectiveness, that was meant to evoke pure immaterial experience in a white void, to go to the other side of the known towards the new realism of incorporeal creation (Figure 10). “Only when consciousness is liberated from the habit of seeing pieces of nature, Madonnas and shameless Veneras in the paintings, shall we witness the true work of art” (Malevich,

1916). Thus, apostrophizing the pure form returns us the null position of a “new realism”, about which Malevich spoke, whilst facing us with the basic ontological questions of our own existence.

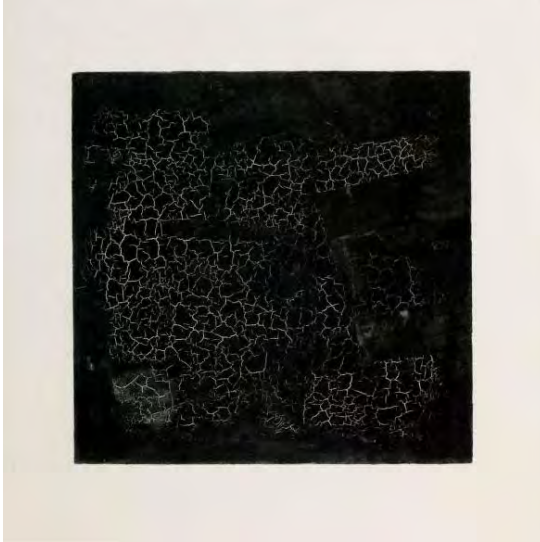


Figure 10: Kazimir Malevich (1915). Black Square. / Source: Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kazimir_Malevich,_1915,_Black_Suprematic_Square,_oil_on_linen_canvas,_79.5_x_79.5_cm,_Tretyakov_Gallery,_Moscow.jpg

Through the critical phases of comprehension and practice of the form of inhabitations, we can perceive a historical dedication to certain spatial themes as well as their application in the specific period of questioning and deconstructing the continuous architectural language. From the application of political and production models, to the idea of architecture as a tool, the spatial syntax of figurative architecture in the architectural figures of exclusion is broken. In this way the complex continuity has been reduced and excluded in particular extracted figures.

But the line and the square in the history of architecture have a complex and contradictory geometrical and program meaning as primary forms which experience different ideal imprints. This ambivalence, the program interpretation and elemental formality of their dedication, makes them essential for spatial and social questions throughout history, from open forms of distribution to closed, conserved forms of architectural artifacts. Thus, we want to use this duality of forms in the line and the square as a basis of non-figurative architecture, which will establish a distinct dialogue with a program, as well as a place, thereby resulting in an archetypical form which can have a direct, but at the same time autonomous relationship with the program as a changeable content, and a place as a territorial entity.

Towards Non-figurative Architecture

In a number of projects from architectural studies, we used the basic conditions, the line and the frame, not as dominant models related to systems and strategies of hierarchical organization but as a direct tactic of urban and rural transformation - to return it to the real needs for surprise and utilization. In the research carried out through the project, we called the referent approaches and methods of transformation, tactics unlike strategies that meant complete systemic and hierarchical approaches to the city. Tactics are approaches that arise from the local situation. Through two explored cases we will reflect the recent situation, in relationship with the domination of the formal organization, as the linear distribution of a frame.

Roadside Picnic

In the project “Roadside Picnic”, the condition of the Balkans from the perspective of a certain unforeseeable future is presented (Tasic, 2016). The project consists of the graphical part of a diagram, and a picturesque representation and a story (Figure 10). The story is shown in its entirety:

“Roadside Picnic: The Lost Balkan city”

For a long time, the vertical structures in a regular rhythm along the Vardar valley, running in the north-south direction, in the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula have been an enigma. Who erected them and why? Their regularity points to a certain intent and activity, their configuration and typology towards certain symbolisms and permanence. For a long time, they have been deserted, and afterwards the entire surrounding zone closed off. Different stories have been spread about the previous inhabitants of the area, thousands that at a certain moment erected the vertical structures as a linear city. Some said that they are symbolic monuments, without a specific purpose, that they are necropolises, fortifications, the deeds of a faraway civilization and even alien artifacts from unknown visitors. But no one ever knew anything with certainty, except that they originated in the early XXI century. There were witnesses of strange and inexplicable things, happening in the closed zones, shadows of people, sightings of desperate children, women and men, of desperation and hope, of different voices telling their own stories. At the edge of these zones, existed people who had the ability to enter them, and they were guides into the uncertainty of these areas, which are rumored to contain the secret of this world” (Tasic, 2016).

The diagram relates to the north-south direction, which leads along the Vardar and Morava valleys in the territory of Republic of Macedonia and the Balkan Peninsula. The marked lines point towards a certain intensity in the past, a distribution in a certain interval of identical physical mechanism. The structures are utilitarian but also symbolic, from the current perspective connected to recent or possible massive movements. So these vertical structures provide places to stay, but also serve as a symbol of presence. In the future there is no document of the events. This project is inspired by the science fiction novel “Roadside Picnic” (Strugatsky and Strugatsky, 1972/77) and furthermore by the movie “Stalker” by Andrei Tarkovsky (1979). The project extends and shows the impossibility of the contact of different civilizations. In the movie an alien visit is suggested, while in the project this is unclear, but is definitely a marking from someone else. Exactly in this condition the layering and interposition as the source of an enigma and oblivion is expressed. The lost city is a repressed memory, but also an opportunity to unfold the relationship between different socio-cultural layers.

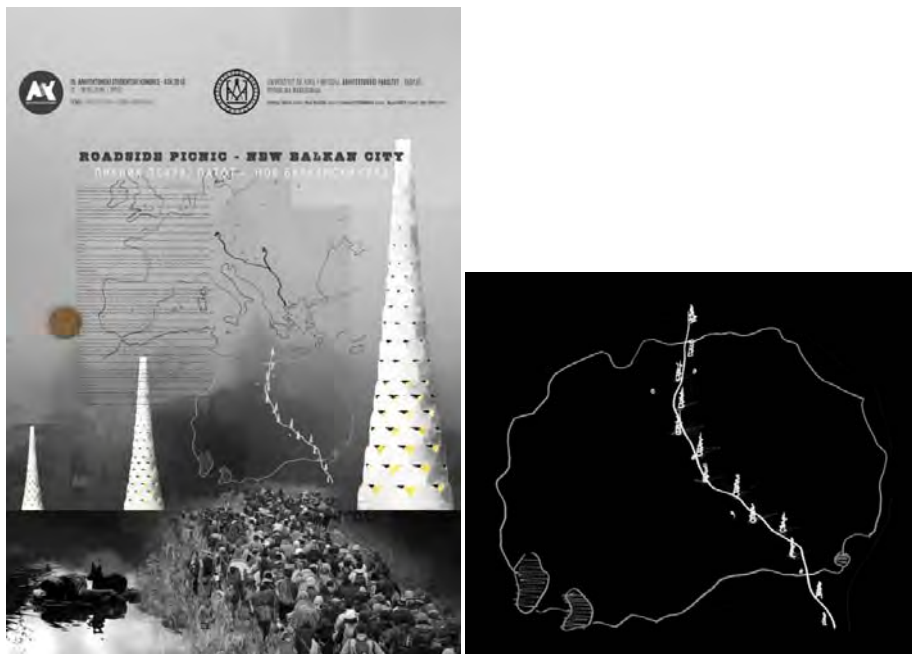


Figure 11: Sasha Tasic (mentor), Viktorija Taseva, Maja Velkova, Katerina Ristomanova, Bojan Gjurov, (2016). Architecture during migration.

Square, Forms of Inhabitation, 72-hour City

In the project “Square, forms of Inhabitation”, we develop a scenario for a possible transition of the interaction between different people from different socio-cultural backgrounds. On the border between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia, between the railway and highway lines is an interpolated square, to accept and encourage the refugees in their journey, forming a transfer center of sorts, as a temporary city, a 72-hour city (based on the 72-hour document for transit through Macedonia). The frame is a square shape with dimensions 400x400m, containing a closed service perimeter and an open structure which can accept standard containers, depending on the capacity of visitors. In this way, a continuously mobile system in perpetual construction is formed. The space in the middle remains open and within it is installed the common content, with a utilitarian but also narrative character, a theme park of an instantaneous archeology which is being built and handmade by the refugees, and which references the local area, as well as their home countries. “Amphitheatres”, “temples” and “stoas” are traces of the presence of the refugees from different cultural and spiritual backgrounds (Figure 12).

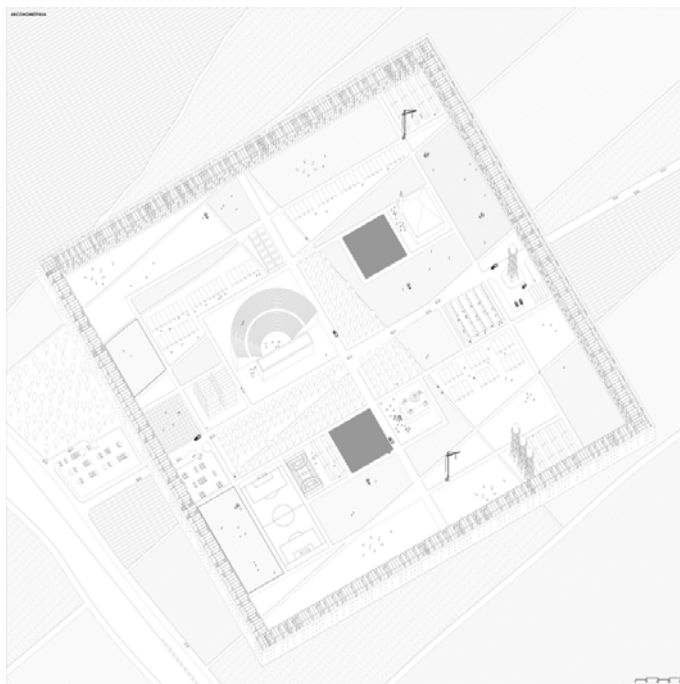


Figure 12: Katerina Ristomanova, Bojan Gjurov, (2016/2017). Square, forms of inhabitation. Border Crossing, Bogorodica, Integrative Studio UKIM.

Spellbound – Lines on a White Tablecloth

There is something odd about Edwards, the character in the film *Spellbound* by Alfred Hitchcock (1945). He exhibits a hostile reaction when young psychoanalyst Peterson draws certain lines with a fork upon a tablecloth. The main character in this film has a phobia of lines on a white background (Figure 13). An incident caused by his amnesia and a general guilt complex. The lines are connected with tragic events, the murder of his friend during skiing and the accident that happened to his brother in his childhood. These two incidents are associated with a linear structure and disturb him by evoking memories that make him feel guilty hence his attempt at trying to suppress these memories.



Figure 13: Lines on a tablecloth with a fork, footage from the Alfred Hitchcock's film, *Spellbound* (1945).

We are confronted with a world of fragments from different layers of modernization that disturb us consequently we try to suppress our memories of them. However, they are still present. Their historic failure in reorganizing society and the total

environment, blurs their contours. We associate our failure not with the mode of behavior, but with them, as the subject of action.

But what are the forms and spatial patterns of the world during the state of continuous change? Could a certain depth structure be recognized in the contemporary dynamic of social and spatial transformation? Obviously they arise from certain crisis situations. In the condition of continuous change we can recognize certain forms of inhabitations such as extreme scenarios in our everyday lives. If in the past they were a part of an exclusive paradigm of domination, today they appear as fragments of order, but also as opportunities for a new interpretation. How can we today perceive these elementary formal organizations?

Firstly, crisis situations lead us to extreme interpretations of formal patterns. We lose the complex syntax of man's spatial organization and it is reduced to certain primary gestures. In periods of migration, the linear and closed formations become dedicated to the intervention of forms of inhabitation.

Secondly, crisis situations lead us to a reinvestment of the founding principles of order, towards the reconstruction of the basic forms of settlement, as defined forms. Contrary to the continuous deconstruction of form, the basic forms bring us closer to the new realism of the word.

Both cases, "Roadside Picnic, the lost Balkan City" and "Square, Forms of Inhabitation" are related to different conditions of form; firstly, in a metaphysics of form; secondly, in a pragmatic interaction of form. The first describes the impossibility of a true relationship of different cultural affiliations, while the second is about a social and cultural continuity. Formal organizations are traces of possible events, which describe the tragic exclusivity of a lost Balkan city and of the pragmatic performance of a transit city. If both cases depict the separation of human experience, the redirection towards elementary forms depicts the potential, opportunities and limitations of a new reality of a non-figurative architecture.

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