

For 2010, the second year of the IACSA Newsletter, we propose continuity. Thus you will recognise in this issue some already familiar rubrics. We do our best to procure acceptable English, being fully aware that we are living in a kind of linguistic favela, founded merely on basic understanding.

Only few of the readers will already have read the first statement on «Cultural Studies in Architecture» from more than a year ago. As surprising as it might sound, the text remained unaltered and waits for critical discussion and honing. Here it is again.

We are happy to announce the becoming of IACSA's website where you will be able to download newsletters from the archive. We will inform you in the next issue

The Network Editor

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The CSA Quotation Guide, continued

« In today's world the fallows form a receptacle of traces. (...) One must have travelled the large belt of cities like Milan in order to visualise the extent of a chaos, half industrial, half rural. (...) In the meantime, the stagnation has occurred that disquiets both public and authorities. But how should one stay unaware of the marks of human passing underlying this disarticulated landscape? In this labyrinth of mudholes there are meandering trails which indicate habitual walks. (...) An entire clandestine people has fugaciously appropriated these depressions¹; a minority converted them into a field of confrontation, a majority into a simple circuit of idle talk. It is obviously unthinkable to record these traces in order to have them mapped. »

From: Gilles Barbey, *Traces humaines*. In: *Horizons de l'esprit. Etapes d'une recherche*, p. 116f. Infolio, Gollion 2002. (Translation J.W.)

«In Soviet times the kitchen became a place where underground discussions were going on and where alternative thought was formed. So, the kitchen became a public space (...). Where does that lead me? Firstly, to understand a potential public

¹ *Bas-lieux* (here: *depressions*), in French is the antonym to *haut-lieux*, vantage point, elevation also in a figurative sense, place of worship of any kind. Barbey indicates both the low physical level and the low cultural profile of the places he is referring to. The same ambiguity of geographical and technical significance applies to *non-lieux* (see Marc Augé), a jurisdictional expression for a jurisdictional case dropped without result.

sphere as produced in social dialogue, not given in design. Social dialogue enables the shaping of a social imagination, hence glimpses of how else a society might be organised. This resembles Lefebvre's idea of lived time – constituted by moments of liberation within the routines of everyday life. And it leads me to ask to what extent cultural work, as in contemporary dissident art within the affluent society, might contribute to articulation of such a public sphere. »

From: Malcolm Miles, *Reclaiming the public sphere*, <http://www.malcolmmiles.org.uk/Reclaiming.html> (cst 10-01-25). Earlier versions of this paper were given as talks 2005 in Yerevan and 2006 in Amsterdam.

What are «Cultural studies in architecture» ?

1. The field

«Cultural studies in architecture» is a field of empirical and theoretical scientific interest and application. It is explicitly not one more subdiscipline, but an open thematic realm explored and covered by many disciplines and practices. «Cultural studies in architecture» carry with them an invitation to theorise the built environment in ways that are not obscured by authorised ideologies or canonised practises.

Of the words that form the name of the association, «architecture» shall be discussed in the first place, because it defines the association's place in the world; «in» is a preposition that cannot be neglected; and «Cultural studies», although a set of methods and ways of theorising as much established as contested and varied, has to be rethought with respect to the present aim.

2. «Architecture»

We understand architecture as the built and managed environment, existing space *and* the production of space, static and process-like spaces. It may be considered as coinciding with a notion of cultural habitat. It expresses human interests and in turn acts on them, it is shelter and arena. And it is a constantly renovated and re-designed archive, the hinge of transmission in time from generation to generation.

3. «In»

It is not indifferent if we had chosen for the name of the association the word «of» architecture instead of «in» architecture.

With «of» we would assume the status of a discipline at the service of architecture in its narrow sense as the charge of construction and building as business. If we are placing cultural studies «in» an architecture which approaches «habitat» both as surround and as lifeworld, we assume an active stance within the field. It is thus possible to read the «in» as a «through», both spatially and theoretically: culture materialising from the ground.

The «in» also incites science, arts and applied disciplines to enter a common field so far and get into exchange with applied disciplines.

4. «Cultural studies»

The term «cultural studies» is found in the WWW approximately 8.5 million times. As we know, the definitions of the term vary through its history and by «region». We understand CS as by their very definition trans- and metadisciplinary. For us they are an «ongoing intellectual project» which is concerned with the phenomenal world in its perceptual richness and functional complexity. In fact Empirische Kulturwissenschaft is the bridgestone for this venture from disciplines of cultural studies to the disciplines of the built environment. Cultural studies are thus fundamentally multiperspectival and use a methodology which fosters interpretive approaches, discourse analytics and emic perspectives. Doing this they are basically open for new phenomena and new ways of inquiry. As much as their work is driven by theoretical interests they are bound to the

question of the relevance of their approaches and insights for the lifeworld. Their knowledge has implicitly a political dimension in

its original sense, contributing to knowledge, empowerment and action.

IACSA

Scene dialogues No 2

Images taken seriously have an enormous capacity to encourage dialogues. «Cultural Studies in Architecture» methodology is for us based on dialogues. In Newsletter 1(5) 2009 we have started the exploratory format of the "scene dialogues", based on photographs by Jürgen Krusche. Having read them he presents his authors' view of the photograph, of the comments by the four dialogue partners and of the place itself. ▶

By inviting people to comment on Krusche's photographs, we realised that "visual literacy" is hitting narrow side rails: reading texts goes without saying, but for many translating pictures into texts exceeds the limits of uneasiness. Nevertheless, Stéphane Montavon managed to deliver his account of the proposed picture (p. 4f.) ▶▶

Crossing Cultures / Crossing Spaces

Commentary by the picture author of scene dialogues No 1

by Jürgen Krusche

The picture of *scene dialogue 1* has been shot in Berlin Neukölln. In the background the blocks can be discerned that are typical for Berlin's Wilhelminian development. It is therefore difficult to imagine that this photograph is from «anywhere in Europe». It could well be from another German city, e.g. Leipzig, but never from Paris or Milano.

Neukölln is a neighbourhood southeast from the centre of Berlin, neither central nor peripheral. It is an area, except for the so-called Reuter-Kiez, still escaping the gentrification advancing into Kreuzberg and Prenzlauer Berg. Mostly Turkish people choose to live in Neukölln. The high street leading North-South through it is called – that's the first crossing: Karl-Marx-Strasse.

The market appearing on the photograph takes place weekly on Karl-Marx-Platz in the very core of Neukölln. It is run exclusively by Turkish marketers who sell fruit and vegetables, characteristically in big lots. Shopping bags and trolleys are full to the brim. The market is about to close and everything is now sold with discount. The empty cardboard boxes pile up. The women – almost

exclusively women, rarely men or couples, are shopping here – have heavy loads to carry. Children are welcome to help them.

The sculpture, called «Imaginäres Theater» («imaginary theatre»), is a fountain.



It has been created in 1986 by Hartmut Bonk, an artist living in Berlin. The encounter between the bronze figures and people on the market square is somehow theatrical. It represents the crossing of two cultures that gains its significance only on a second glimpse. At first sight one wonders if the motionless and sublime statues are out of place or if, on the contrary, the colourful

scene around them with the tents, splint boxes and cardboard boxes, women and children is the result of displacement. One of them looks as if not belonging to that place. Even the brawny centaur feels visibly awkward and as if he wanted to leave the scene, but the tent obstructs his passage. And posing in the middle of the turmoil, like the two naked bronze companions, is slightly out of place. No, a «melting», to use the words of dialogue partner Johanna Hällsten, cannot be seen; but is definitely an exciting encounter.

The two female bronze figures with a Greek appearance are totally naked and exhibit a striking contrast to the almost totally veiled Turkish women and girls. A long gone occidental ideal encounters present. The space that opens on this square covers more than two thousand years of history: the pre-Christian Greek ideal, materialised in the bronze sculptures, strikes Muslim culture effective for 1500 years. The

Just that by Stéphane Montavon²

While coming home from that bald mountain where we have been preparing a lamb ragout with apricots for New Year, still under the ire of a fast and snowy downhill race we cling to our sacks in the train to Basel, and this is where I have opened the waffle iron of my laptop, showing the picture to one of my fellows who confirms me, because he used to study it a bit, that the characters in the image are Japanese, so what?

Once the image is localised, our distance to it being guaranteed, how shall I continue, since the train is inevitably approaching Basel, because lacking any larger context except for IACSA of course, there is still nothing but a delayed dialogue with other commentators who we don't know... Just that, wholly virtual, one can know for the moment...

Even more, since there is no story, in the iconographic sense, recognisable in the picture, and moreover one withholds the story around this picture, the commentator

naked and the mythological – Leda with the swan and the centaur – meet the veiled. Disclosure and exhibition appear alongside with concealment and withdrawal. Wouldn't it be interesting to comment in this place the relationship of the public and the private? The ideal meets the real, ideal space of aesthetic perfection is colonised by living space of urban everyday life. Again, no: these spaces are too much apart from each other to melt, but at least there, on Karl-Marx-Platz in Neukölln in a built milieu and form a new, highly complex and temporary space.

Overall, this encounter expresses a certain lack of mutual understanding. Yet can we, realistically, expect that these two cultural realms, here on Berlin cobblestone, understand each other from the outset? Nothing but the encounter, to co-presence is worth a lot, mutually drawing near, even if naked Leda is just a pedestal for the extension cord of the greengrocer nearby.

will end up by pulling the image into his very own history... In order to avoid this he can presumably start with the most trivial: which movements and gestures have produced this representation? And then: Which movements does the represented space permit its users to bring about? Which gestures are programmed by the interfaces of that world there? One would like to depart on: to walk past, to drive past, and, almost without a pause, drop a coin, eat, discard... *take (and live with others) away...* Why, no: a description of the type «the bonnet of Charles Bovary» would promise more exhilaration.

Arriving in a left-skewing parallel (relating to the objective) the winding alley leads downwards around a building of mixed elements and with a roof pieced up with corrugated iron sheet and plastic, whose oblique wall is partly disguised by a metal stockade against which leans a series of vending machines. This extension in the form of a «7» leads us to assume that be-

tween palisade and wall lays a scant but certainly accessible interstice. The door is momentarily closed, but the perverse framing makes us believe that its use could be more important than just stocking. To this riddle is added a soupçon of amazement

about the quite failed try to harmonise this collage of recycled surfaces on a white background where only soft drinks would emerge in order to present themselves in the neon blaze. Well, the heterogeneity of this corner withstands, even in a grotesque and pathetic



way, especially under the claws of the tags whose *no-futuresque* English reveals the brand of – we are in Japan, didn't we say that already – a globalised urban culture more than somebody's signature, these tags themselves being here just a posh eyesore, pure decor at least, leaving the goods intact... The chaotic corner resists indeed, but at the same time it demarcates itself quite meticulously and strings together on the low curbstone of the street which leads, slightly sunken, in a straight parallel, smooth, unobstructed...

To this corner, to this precarious prism which the section of the street shows, corresponds the triangle built by the characters.

A man, standing, with an orange vest – a delivery man? a postman? someone from the refuse collection? or a matter of far-east orientalism, to be ashamed of? This man would see us and come towards us... perhaps... in short, a man standing watches us standing and taking photographs, whereas we watch another one squatting, at the bins' height, who is unaware of us. A hurried employee? a gambler after a night's wake? Totally absorbed by his snack, this one, and what shoes! Meanwhile we see the signal cones just at our feet. They also crowd on the rim of the bend, separating us from the other humans and from chaos on the opposite shore. Once more we are on the good side...

on the side of the bright pavement, the side of a bar or a disco, whose owners ban the stopping of cars just for the moment of getting a drink from across.

Leaving the dense patterns on the left, with tracery of wires and ad signs, our backstreet bends as a sort of chicane before heading towards the simple grids at the back on the right, and in this move it offers a tinkered and temporary equipment (which could well be in place for an indefinite time, depending on the neglect of the town planners), dedicated to quick transit: intestinal, pedestrian, automobile and... anamnestic. So quick indeed that, as soon as the following text of an epoch (thirty years ago) when the digital was still not existing comes to

² Stéphane Montavon is a young swiss writer. His online texts available at www.sitaudis.com. Forthcoming: *Les écoutis le Caire*, Gruenrekorder, Germany, March 2010. Translation from French: J.W.

one's mind: «The flash of the haiku does not clarify, does not reveal anything; it is like the flash of photography which one would tend to use with precaution [...] but without having charged the camera with a cartridge. Or: haiku (the streak) renders the referencing gesture of the little child which points a finger on whatever it is [...], saying just: that! Of such an immediate movement [...] that what is designated is the very nullity of all classification of the object, nothing particular»³... one's train already enters the Basel main station.

³ Roland Barthes, *L'empire des signes*, Seuil, Paris 1970.

Calls and Announcements

Call for Papers

Государственный комитет имущественных вопросов Азербайджанской Республики приглашает Вас на международный семинар Рабочей группы по управлению земельными ресурсами (РГУЗ) ЕЭК ООН по теме «Эффективное и прозрачное управление земельными ресурсами в странах ЕЭК», который намечается провести в Баку (Азербайджан) 4–5 марта 2010 года.

Эффективное и прозрачное управление земельными ресурсами является мощным инструментом для обеспечения устойчивого развития земельного рынка и рынка недвижимости, которые играют фундаментальную роль в обеспечении социального и экономического процветания страны. На недавних обсуждениях Рабочей группы по управлению земельными ресурсами было подчеркнуто, что транспарентные институты снижают стоимость доступа к кредитам для населения и повышают доверие общества

к публичным организациям. В целях поддержки экономического развития и вклада в социальное благосостояние данные и информация по земельному рынку и рынку недвижимости должна собираться по четким стандартам, информация должна быть четко документирована и доступна и возможность фальсификации должна быть предотвращена.

Вследствие этого будут обеспечены благоприятные условия для эффективных операций по кадастрам и системам регистрации.

Семинар в Баку проходит в то время, когда Республика Азербайджан находится на стадии осуществления реформы регистрационной системы недвижимости. В этом контексте дискуссии и выводы семинара будут играть важную роль для успешного завершения данного проекта. Мы надеемся, что наш семинар также явится форумом для участников, где они смогут поделиться своими знаниями по

национальному опыту по таким важным темам. Мы с нетерпением ждем встречи с Вами на семинаре в Баку.

Если Вы хотите принять участие, просим заполнить прилагаемую регистрационную форму и направить ее по адресу office@emdk.gov.az и zauraze@yandex.ru до 15 февраля 2010 года.

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Для получения более подробной информации по семинару Рабочей группы по управлению земельными ресурсами ЕЭК обращайтесь к <http://www.emdk.gov.az/?/en/content/381/> С наилучшими пожеланиями,
Организационный Комитет

Impressum

IACSA is an association according to Swiss law, founded in 2008. It consists of the *Founding Advisors' Board*, the *Working Board*, and the *Network Editor*. IACSA membership is free. It is open for everyone interested and willing to contribute to build the network. IACSA's registered office's address is at Hammerstrasse 14, 4058 Basel in Switzerland. The IACSA Newsletter is published every two months in electronic form.

How to Register as a Member

If you sense that the idea of IACSA covers the field of your interest you are welcome to participate as a member of the Working Board. Membership is free. Simply write to

iacsa@mobileculturestudies.com

an informal demand and get an electronic version of the bylaws and an electronic registration form. You are free to ask any question concerning IACSA which we will answer within the bounds of our capacities.

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