

## **The And Space in the third millennium**

"Multiplicity is never in the terms, whatever their number, nor in the set, or totality, of them. Multiplicity is precisely in the AND, which does not have the same nature as the elements or the sets. (...) The AND is neither the one nor the other, it is always between the two, it is the boundary, there is always a boundary, a vanishing trace or flow, only we don't see it, because it is scarcely visible. And yet it is along this vanishing trace that things happen, becomings are made, revolutions are sketched out."(1)

Gilles Deleuze

### **The end of the either-or society**

The countdown has begun. Take one deep breath and the second millennium will belong to the past for good and all. Contrary to what some people claim, this doesn't mean the end of human history, but the opposite: history is just beginning. After a long prehistoric struggle with nature, first for survival, and then to conquer it, we have achieved a level of knowledge and social organization that, provided we live in the better half of this paradise, enables us to live in a social world. What this social world will look like and whether we will find it to our liking, time alone can tell. The fact is that the late Capitalist system that emerged victorious after the fall of the Berlin wall can no longer derive its *raison d'être* from blaming the other. Polarities of good and evil no longer serve to justify the civilization process we are involved in. Either-or categories such as East-West or Left and Right have lost their substance. Since the Cold War the West has been engaged in a crisis of how to cope with its own success; the agenda for social possibilities has to be drawn up all over again. What modernity is, or might become, is less clear than ever. The political and social lexicon of space, city and architecture and of the distinctions between public and private has become obsolete at a stroke and has to be rewritten. Formerly the dominant forces were separation and specialization, the struggle for clarity and the reduction of the world to calculable proportions; now we talk about simultaneity, multiplicity, uncertainty, chaos theory, networks, hubs and nodal points, interaction, the hybrid, ambivalence, schizophrenia, space of flows, cyborgs and so on. The either-or world in which we think, act and live has increasingly become an illusion. Our modernity no longer develops mainly in instrumental, rational and linear terms; instead it takes its direction from the rules of side-effects. In short we live in a new modernity characterized by a chaos that tends to become ever more complex. In one way or another conflicts and experiments are emerging that cut a path beyond all either-or polarities. In short: we live in the age of 'the And'.

The And is a process that never stops and that refuses to be understood in linear fashion. It was with good reason that Foucault defined the next century as Deleuzian (2). It by no means is easy to live in a time in which the And prevails. Our historically accumulated knowledge for acting in the now has become distinctly threadbare and new instruments for dealing with the And need to be developed. One encouraging feature is that recently an increasing number of research projects has attempted to grasp our present "age of the And". Knowbotic Research developed one such project.

## **Real virtuality**

During the 20th century we discovered how to move in space by train, car or plane. These means of transport were of crucial importance for what we call our modern age. The second modernity that will come about during the third millennium will be characterized primarily by information technology and services industries. None of our space–time constructions will resemble those we relied on in previous epochs. Manuel Castells comments on this future time that is taking shape right now: "Localities become disembodied from their cultural, historical, geographic meaning, and are reintegrated into functional networks, or into image collages, inducing a space of flows that substitutes for the space of places. Time is erased in the new communication system, when past, present, and future can be programmed to interact with each other in the same message. The *space of flows* and *timeless time* are the material foundations of a new culture, that transcends and includes the diversity of historically transmitted systems of representation: the culture of real virtuality where make–believe is belief in the making." (3) He continues: "And this culture of real virtuality (...) is a system in which reality itself (that is, people's material/symbolic existence) is entirely captured, fully immersed in a virtual image setting, in the world of make believe, in which appearances are not just on the screen through which experience is communicated, but they become the experience."

It is a fact that this second modernity of the And and the "culture of real virtuality" transforms chaos itself into a greater chaos with results that are often quite unacceptable. The question is therefore raised of what kind of modernity we are talking about – what are its criteria and what level of rigidity and complexity will people be prepared to put up with in the third millennium. The question becomes particularly pressing once we realize that our new history can no longer be based on either–or thinking because we live in a time where the space of flows calls the shots. To sum up, if the And is inevitable as real virtuality and if it is our only chance of a better world, shouldn't we embark at once on this fascinating and frightening adventure?

In my opinion "10\_dencies", the installation designed by Knowbotic Research, is a perfect model precisely because it experiments with and operates in the And condition. On the one hand it presents the real nature of our spatial urban identity – namely a complex network of rhizomatic, mainly invisible transactions that make up our identity. On the other hand its designers aim to intervene in the social and cultural fields. In order to identify the overlaps of the different aspects (which in practice operate more or less simultaneously) of the installation "10\_dencies Questioning Urbanity", I will pay separate attention to two specific dimensions.

### **The first dimension: The Space of flows**

Is there anyone who does not have a stake in the idea of the city? The future belongs to urbanity. In the third millennium ^universal~ urbanization is inevitable. Up till now few projects have succeeded in representing the true nature of the city. Most of the digital cities one finds on the internet or in installations in exhibition spaces fail to capture the true dynamic and complexity of the city. One of the better attempts was Jeffrey Shaw's project, The Legible City of 1988. (4) The user cycles along a digital route through a city constructed of letters that form sentences expressing different experiences of the city. The cyclist is a spectator of a frozen city that has been "staged". He wanders alone and lonesome along the streets. In 10\_dencies

however a deliberate attempt is made to avoid any static representation of the invisible dynamic network of the elements that make up the city. Knowbotic Research looks for paths that enable the user to intervene in the urban network alone or in company. The invisible lines and patterns that move through the city have an interactive form. The installation displays a network city that, to quote Manuel Castell, (5) is constructed of: "... the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows." By flows he means "purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in the economic, political, and symbolic structures of society". The first layer, the first material foundation for this space of flows, "is actually constituted by a circuit of electronic pulses (microelectronics, telecommunications, computer processing, broadcasting systems, and high speed transportation – also based on information technologies)...". In this condition place does not disappear, but its logic and meaning is absorbed in the network. The second layer of the space of flows is constituted by its nodes and hubs. The space of flows is not placeless, although its structural logic is. This network links specific places with carefully defined social, cultural, physical and functional character traits. Some places are exchangers – communication "hubs" that play a coordinating role in enabling all the elements in the network to interact effectively; others are "nodes" – strategically important places that carry out series of locally linked activities and the organization around a key function in the network. The city of the third millennium can therefore only be understood if we conceive of it in our analysis as a process instead of a place. The success of Knowbotic Research's installation is that it does not just render visible the invisible network that comprises the identity of every city; it also makes clear that the identity of the space should be understood as a complex network where space has become fluid. We suddenly realize that the representation of meaning in space and time depends on the movements in the network and not on the static representation we find in many digital cities. It opens up the virtual network of real overlapping meanings.

### **The second dimension: Dialogue and reflexive modernization**

We can now represent what the And of the network society actually looks like, as Knowbotic has shown in the installation *^10\_dencies~*; this does not however mean we know how to act in it. To do this, we need two other notions that escape either-or constellations. One surprising feature is that our second modernity shows the same individuals who are increasingly dependent on the economy of this space of flows as also being increasingly reflexive with regard to this space of flows. In this context Ulrich Beck (6) says: "Reflexive modernization, then, is supposed to mean that a change of industrial society which occurs surreptitiously and unplanned in the wake of the normal, automatized modernization and with an unchanged, intact political and economic order implies the following: a radicalization of modernity, which breaks up the premises and the contours of industrial society and opens up paths to another modernity." In short, reflexivity turns out to be a confrontation with oneself that is made possible by the break-up of old systems of control. Our democracy, for instance, is in a crisis phase because it still operates within national borders while our economies have long since exerted influence beyond these borders. One striking feature of our second modernity is that, when we collect data from field research and analyze it, moments emerge out of the "nowhere" of the

network society that our either-or prejudices could never have predicted. It is important then to distill all kinds of data from the local domain and to incorporate these in a surveyable datascape. Because it is this datascape that effectively creates reflexivity out of itself. The sum of social economic and cultural data that Knowbotic Research has collected in Tokyo can indeed be understood as a reflexive datascape. 10\_dencies confronts us with a Tokyo-style datascape in motion and enables the user not only to reflect mentally on the project; it also invites visitors to intervene in the space of flows. It is here that we come across the second notion. The real problem is not deciding who can or may speak (a matter best left to the police, says Deleuze), but rather the fabrication of a set of conditions that would enable everyone to speak. "So how can we manage to speak without giving orders, without claiming to represent something or someone, how can we get people without the right to speak, to speak." (7) – this is what Deleuze asks. The Knowbotic Research project attempts to answer this difficult question by devising a series of movement attractors each of which has a different function in manipulating or modifying the processes of the dynamic particle flows which can be observed in the interface. Knowbotic Research has designed a system with a dialogical character. The user can intervene in the space of flows while in its turn the space of flows responds to the user's intervention. A continual interaction thus occurs that generates ever new results in the space of the installation. In this sense it is an open system.

### **Thirdspace**

To deal with a time in which the AND prevails is by no means easy. Look at the megacities in Asia for instance that, forced by an increasingly radical modernity, are developing both as dazzling beauty and as a form that is dauntingly grotesque. Traditions dissolve or are abused or else they continue to exist alongside and in conjunction with the excrescences of an explosive innovation. This disembedding and reembedding of all social values is at once fascinating and astonishing. The And is a product of something that is never completed. Old categories to determine what is important or which were formerly required simply for society to function no longer work. We have no choice but to experiment with the space of the city in the third millennium. The question remains how far it is also possible to include a critical distance in this space of flows. To an extent the system generates this itself; the And operates reflexively almost automatically. On the other hand we also have to make new dialogues possible that do not merely shout "Yes", but which can also deliberately direct the currents in another direction, without depending on an automatic pilot. The problem is one of no mean complexity because the critical tradition cannot permit itself to fall back on any either-or criticism; it must also develop a critique and alternative that is displayed in the And. Edward Soja has devised the term "Thirdspace" (8) for this space for criticism and alternatives that makes new openings possible. Thirdspace, as Soja sees it, should be understood as a space typified by an "openness of both/and also" with the "also" reverberating back to disrupt the categorical closures implicit in the either/or logic". It is "... an invitation to enter a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible, uncombinable. It is a space where issues of race, class, and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other; where one

can be Marxist and post-Marxist, materialist and idealist, structuralist and humanist, disciplined and transdisciplinary at the same time." The installation of Knowbotic Research generates different "Thirdspaces" because it is possible for the user to influence the dataflows in different ways without provoking a linear development.

Perhaps "10\_dencies Questioning Urbanity" is the third millennium update of Plato's cave with its illuminated shadows. The installation space in Tokyo displays in sound and image a close similarity to Plato's cave that served as model for his notion of the state. Plato answered the question of how human life relates to knowledge, by devising a spatial construct. Knowbotic Research tells a spatial story that confronts us with the status quo of the And and the space of flows. It also attempts to develop a thirdspace in an abstract sense. The abstraction of the discourse that the installation generates means that, while we are not concretely confronted in the domain of the everyday with the question of how we are to move through the third millennium city, we are faced with the many abstract dimensions of our being. How the users' abstract interventions affect this everyday data economically socially and culturally remains as yet unanswered.

This installation is radical in the sense that it confronts us with the network of the space of flows that is normally speaking invisible. We finally realize how the abstract other is restructuring our world. How the interventions of the data flows – dialogically and via the interface – create a thirdspace in the field where the data itself originates is something Knowbotic Research will surely explore in more detail in other cities. In doing so, they are inaugurating the history of space in the third millennium.

Roemer van Toorn, Amsterdam, 1998

- 1) Gilles Deleuze, "Trois question sur 'Six fois deux'", *Cahiers du Cinema*, no. 271, 1976.
- 2) Gilles Deleuze, "Letter to a Harsh Critic", *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1995.
- 3) Manuel Castells, "The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture", Vol. 1, *The Rise of the Network Society*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996.
- 4) See also Jeffrey Shaw, "A User's Manual. From Expanded Cinema to Virtual Reality", Anne-Marie Duguet, Henirich Klotz, Peter Weibel, ZKM, Karlsruhe, 1997.
- 5) Manuel Castells. See note 3).
- 6) Ulrich Beck, "The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernization", in *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash, Ulrich Beck, Sage, Cambridge, 1994.
- 7) Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1995.
- 8) Edward Soja, "Thirdspace", Blackwell, Oxford, 1996.