

The Ghost Airport in
how the threshold defines the militarisation of the spatial self

by

Michelle Poon

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral
Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Architecture

in

Master of Architecture (First Professional)

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THE GHOST AIRPORT IN

how the threshold defines the militarisation of the spatial self

Michelle Poon



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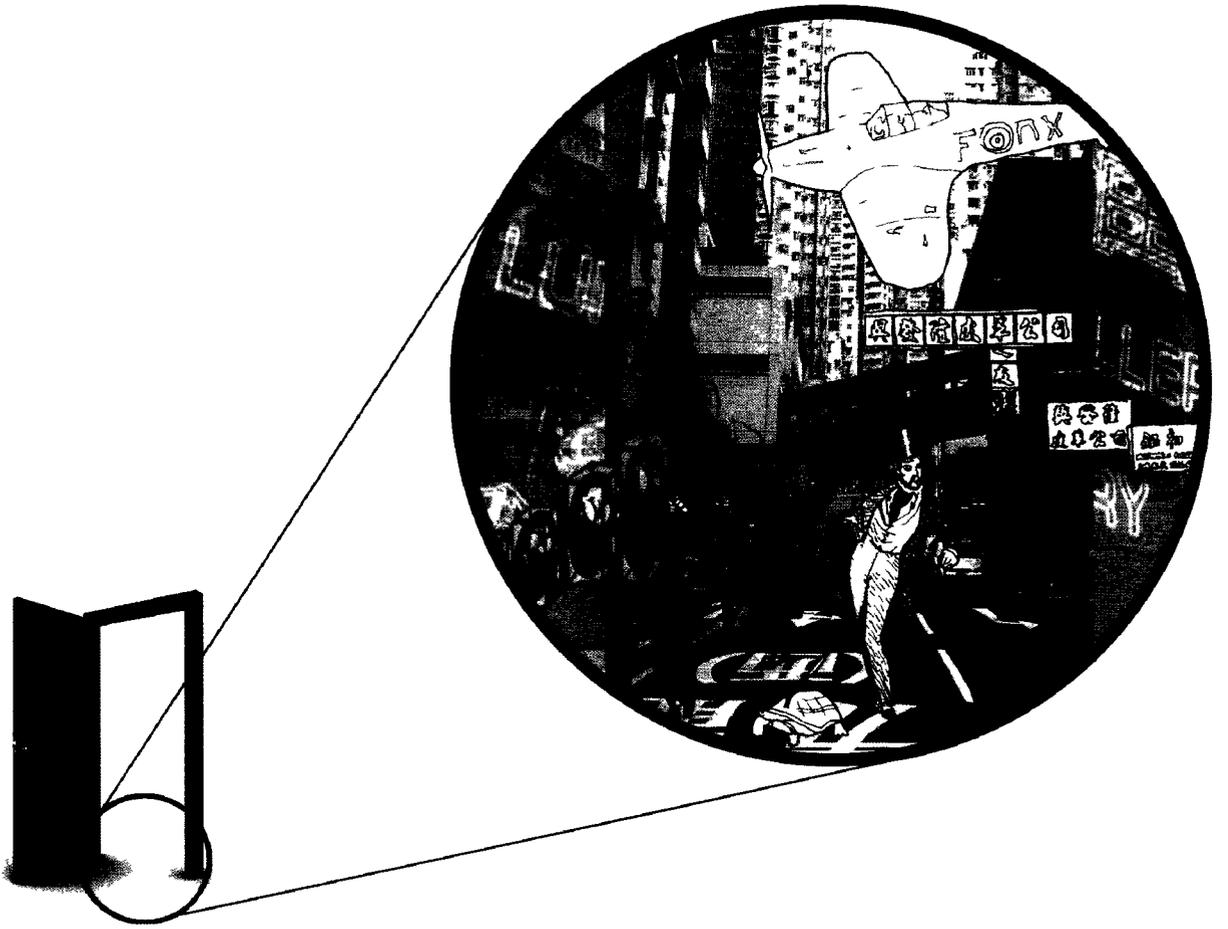


Fig 1

ABSTRACT

« When spatial distance is no longer experienced, the differences between original and reproduction diminish. In the *filmic* perception—i.e., the perception of montage, the juxtaposition of the most disparate images into one unit—the new reality of annihilated in-between spaces finds its clearest expression: the film brings things closer to the viewer as well as closer together. »¹

(emphasis added)

This narrative is contained under an umbrella called militarisation of space, as elaborated from the actions and manifestations from state planning, militant tactics or proletariat reclamation of space. These disruptions of the urban landscape are the mnemonic surfaces that punctuate the gaps in our urban lives—the gaps which, although physically present, leave a black hole within the memory as they lack the variegated layers of living and fall ungraciously into a process of forgetting.

This is a continuous investigation into the perceptions and interpretations of space within a city's tapestry. The confused subject/object relationship is what defines the human scale which architecture so earnestly strives to accommodate, architecture without its user is essentially incomplete.

The interest in defining the self through the *filmic*² section of the city relates to re-envisioning the existence of the self. These bounds have been contracted in both time and place with the ever-consuming multiplicity of technologies. Does the transformation of spatial relations pass the body without acknowledgement, or does the self invent a mediated space to comprehend and redefine the boundaries of architecture and its domain?

Does the city exist as an organism at the mercy of its inhabitants, feeding, chipping and undressing its parts as a maniacal fashion of discovering the self? Do we exist in the city or does the city exist within us?

1 Schivelbusch, W., *The Railway Journey*, p. 42

2 *Filmic* refers to the experience of the metropolis which involves the juxtaposition of the image, the impression and the memory, while neglecting spatial distance, the occurrence of the *montage*, or the overlapping of the fold.

To those with patience while I take my journeys

To those who've inspired to finish them

To whom incited me with the *gravity* for this *grace*

To those who taught me to expose the *rigour* of the
threshold, to *curate* my existence, to *implicate* the city,
and to push the limits of it

And,

to whose boundless support and instigation during
those long hours of the night, the morning, and many
nights after that

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LEXICON

The significant terminology used within this thesis is listed below. The scholarly definitions have been greyed to differentiate from the personal interpretation.

apparatus

A scaffold or carrier of energies and embodiments to the recipient.

1. a set of materials or equipment designed for a particular use

2. the functional processes by means of which a systematized activity is carried out

(de-), (re-), territorialisation

In the context of Deleuze and Guatarri (*A Thousand Plateaus*), the usage of the term can be applied physically, mentally or spiritually as the engagement with new organisations, by way of discarding fixed relations. By taking movements that produce change, the unleashing of creative potentials can take place.

expérience

From French and Latin origins, *expérience* and *experientem* respectively, life's experiences are always experiments with an aspect of progress and recurrence.

extension

The relationship of the self upon the self is a doubling of the body and apparatus into unification, where body may pertain to either organic bodies or an empirical *construct*, i.e. object, machine or ideology.

icon

a figure, representation, or analogy. *icon* is also a misnomer when applied as the image of a city, although increasing intentions have the icon as replacing the city. it is a redundant article that can only be composed of singular notions, where in its attempt to define the city, will always lack the holistic nature of it.

projection - construct

Realities or simulacras (from Jean Baudrillard) that are constructed from certain perceptions or manifestations which are distinct in source or nature of being.

residue

The interruptions which the flaneur seeks to explore. It has no ideals or expectations to uphold, and so any motivation for its being is purely out of accident or by-product.

1. something that remains after a part is taken, separated, or designated or after the completion of a process

spectacle

In context of Jonathan Crary (*Suspensions of Perception*), the term when used in reference towards a city is an allegory of fascination or curiosity towards an object, or a hypnotic transaction where automatic behaviours are coupled with vacant attentiveness.

1. something exhibited to view as unusual, notable, or entertaining, especially, an eye-catching or dramatic public display

2. an object of curiosity or contempt

threshold

the moment of transition, the unnerving potential for change, a hinge for action; the limits of an event bodes upon the fragments of memory; as finite or infinite.

1. the plank, stone, or piece of timber that lies under a door

2. specifically, the end of a run-way, the place, or point of entering or beginning

3. the point at which a physiological or psychological effect begins to be produced

militarisation

While the Latin origins are *militaris* or *miles* (of soldier), the ultimate root of the word may be attributed to Sanskrit *melah* (assembly). It can also be read in the context of *soldarius*, or of "one having pay". In conjunction, this concept carries a notion of having responsibility to oneself to make consequence within a larger group or effort.

Therefore within this thesis, *militarisation* or *militarisation of space* refers to a call to action as protection from the banal, or the awareness of the threshold as having impact upon the doubling upon the self.

1. to give a military character to

2. to equip with military forces and defenses

see *military* - of or relating to soldiers, arms, or war

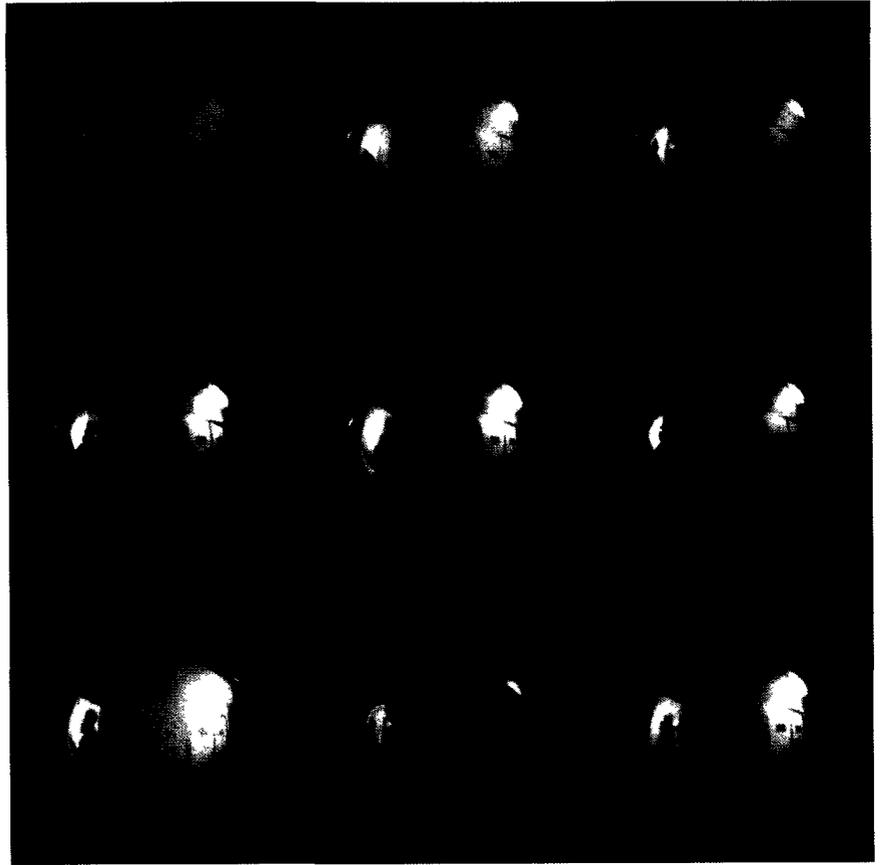


Fig. 2

WITHIN THE THRESHOLD

threshold

a point of beginning a minimum requirement for further action, specifically a determination (as of fact or the existence of a reasonable doubt) upon which something else (as further consideration or right of action) hinges¹

*threshold*¹ the moment of transition, the unnerving potential for change

terminus or destination our attempt to protect us from the banality of our existence and imbue usefulness into existential reality

To reach a stasis is to deny the human condition of productivity and generation The generation, in greatest endurance, builds the fragments of memories that history lays its foundation upon For the micro-/macro-cosm of the threshold, to assume the limit or persuasion is inconsequential to its belonging

•

a door unhinged to the assumption of its limits is the semiotic peripatetic threshold, representative of the spaces that begin to meet, representative of the spaces of *tomorrow* the lens in keyhole is the *egkuklios*² threshold being, a state at the end of the twenty-first century

at its most mundane, the threshold begins with the door—a modest affair of parting conditions If there is a distinction to be crossed, that distinction is a space in itself Magnified to microscopic proportions, that space is an event, a place of movement, change, decision and action

¹ "threshold" *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law* Merriam-Webster, Inc 13 Aug 2011 <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/threshold>>

² Greek *egkuklios* "circular, general"



Fig 3

Fig 4

« Today's landscape hardly constitutes a background into which the architectural object might be thought of as inserting, or integrating, or diffusing itself. Powerful processes of what Gilles Deleuze has called deterritorialisation situate today's architectural objects in non-places, in non-landscapes. Contemporary architectures make their appearance *ex abrupto*, taking us by surprise. Their presence is not connected to a place. Our reception of them is almost always mediated or mediatised by photographic, video, and computerised images, by possible views, and by the disconnection between the built and what goes on around it »¹

SELF-PROPAGATION

There is a characteristic effervescence of a true urban landscape when riding up an 800-metre escalator, leaning far past the rail to peek up at the perfect sky as it eludes between the slightest gaps of the towering edifices. Skyscrapers stand on guard, the narrowest footing disappearing as the verticality drops away with the slope of the hills. Traffic pounds away in every possible space, while creeping around stolen alleyways are street hawkers and wet markets gasping for their share of the essence of Hong Kong. Though it continues to be heralded due to its local culture and history, there is a constant threat to that precarious balance, the recent closure of the Star Ferry's Central Port² displaced its heritage to a parodic version, in the name of spatial consolidation. The historical port emphasised the disorganised embrace of tradition and modernity as one transfers between the subway and ferry.

This is only the surface of the congested terrain where old traditions lie in the cracks of the modern landscape. Cramped for space, the skyline continues to change: buildings have a fifteen-year lifetime, hastened by industrial pollution and the unforgiving elements.

1 de Sola-Morales, I, 1995, p. 22

2 In 2006 amid public protest and controversy, the port as well as the historic clock tower was demolished from its Edinburgh Place location to allow for freeway expansion.

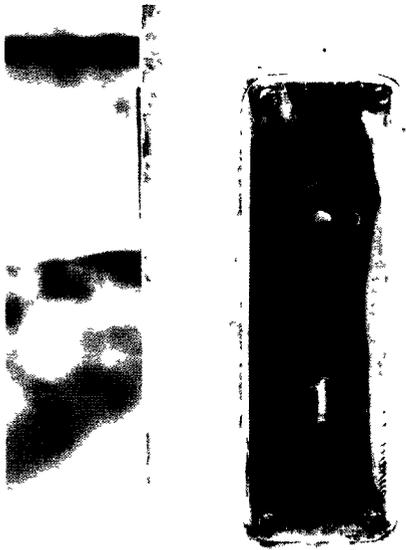


Fig. 5

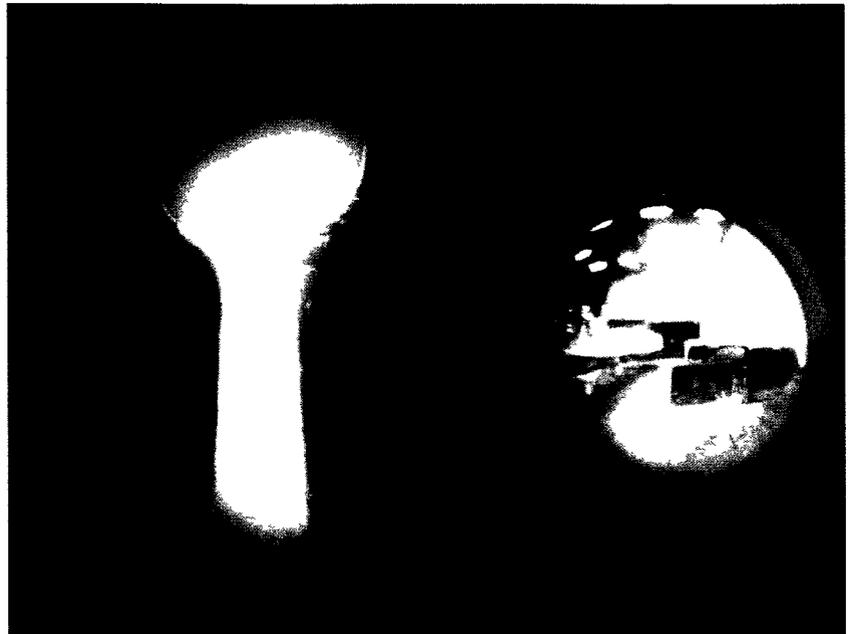


Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Our romantic ideas of what the metropolis offers is the promise of ejecting life out of known trajectories and the passionate derailment of status quo. Of human spontaneity and experiences generating urban form, the stamina or resilient spirit of socio-cultural life are the generators of vibrant communities. The intensification of the city is proportionate to the polarisation of the self. The surfaces of its chaos and malignant cancers are the reflection or resistance of the bodies inhabiting it. The body in desecration is the very tumour which damages itself in the first place.

.

The physical manifestations of architecture is less of an object; but of an *event*³. While « architecture—like all the arts—is an emanation of the *Zeitgeist*. »⁴, architecture's radical potential is in the unfolding of its memories and assembling into gestalt. The limit of its threshold bodes upon the fragments of memory; as finite or infinite.

The self is in creation of one's own threshold, thereby having the capacity for re-defining or manipulating it. The expression of one's world, as one's own thought, is enig-

3 Architecture is meaningless without its users and reciprocal implications.

4. Whyte, W, "How Do Buildings Mean?," *History and Theory*, 45, p. 154.

matically a kind of Deleuzian *fold*⁵ or doubling of one's relation to oneself or effect of the self upon one's world. Or in other words, *fold* is the subjectivity of perception that is hinged towards the objective reality, bearing the divisions of other subjectivities.

As the physical landscape is compacted to its extremes, expansions have borders creeping closer together where distinct territories have their edges overlapping into distinct complexities. The line that once defined *A* from *B* can be zoomed in to an occupiable space seen as *a-b*. If one can imagine a non-physical space to be capable of physical presence, the increase in size or intensity of this other dimension delimits its own properties and overlap upon others, assuming the macroscopic limits of any space is merely its adjacency of another.

The *threshold* or *limen* can be found in all spaces, being continuously created and updated as determined by relativity and relationship to another place. The space between is a distance traversed from the point-of-being, but the appropriation of any determined point only reintroduces another point-of-being. Therefore the threshold is peripatetic and always the space between the self and any other point. Therefore the space, or *void* that is the bridge is a deterritorialised⁶ space exempt from the consciousness in realising the self to the point-of-being. It allows for actions upon and/or within that space in order to achieve that point-of-being, while that point can be outside of the physical realm. Deterritorialisation (and the subsequent reterritorialisation) of space offers the lack of clarity in which temporality and freedom is able to shift and rehabilitate in its inclusion or exclusion. Perception becomes slippery and subjectivity is intensified for non-physical spaces to be taken advantage of. Where discontinuities exist, it has potential to be the catalyst to form complex morphological changes.

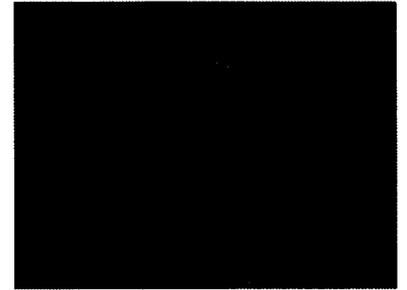


Fig 8
Knotting and folding spaces

5 The Deleuzian fold (*pli*) is the immaterial folding of one's relation to oneself, or the folding of bodies, time and memories in which it doubles back and influences one to another. A yielding of layers.

6 In the context of Deleuze and Guattari (*A Thousand Plateaus*), the usage of the term can be applied physically, mentally or spiritually as the engagement with new organisations, by way of discarding fixed relations. By taking movements that produce change, the unleashing of creative potentials can take place.

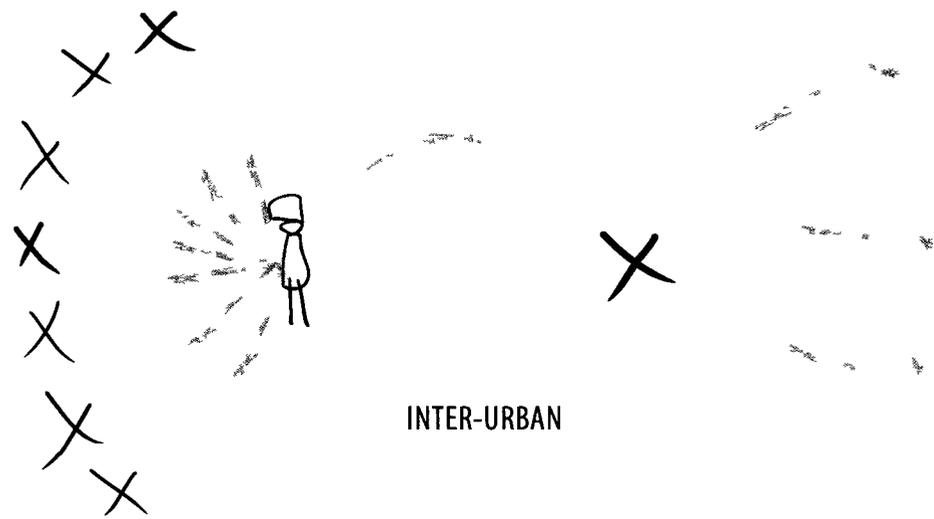
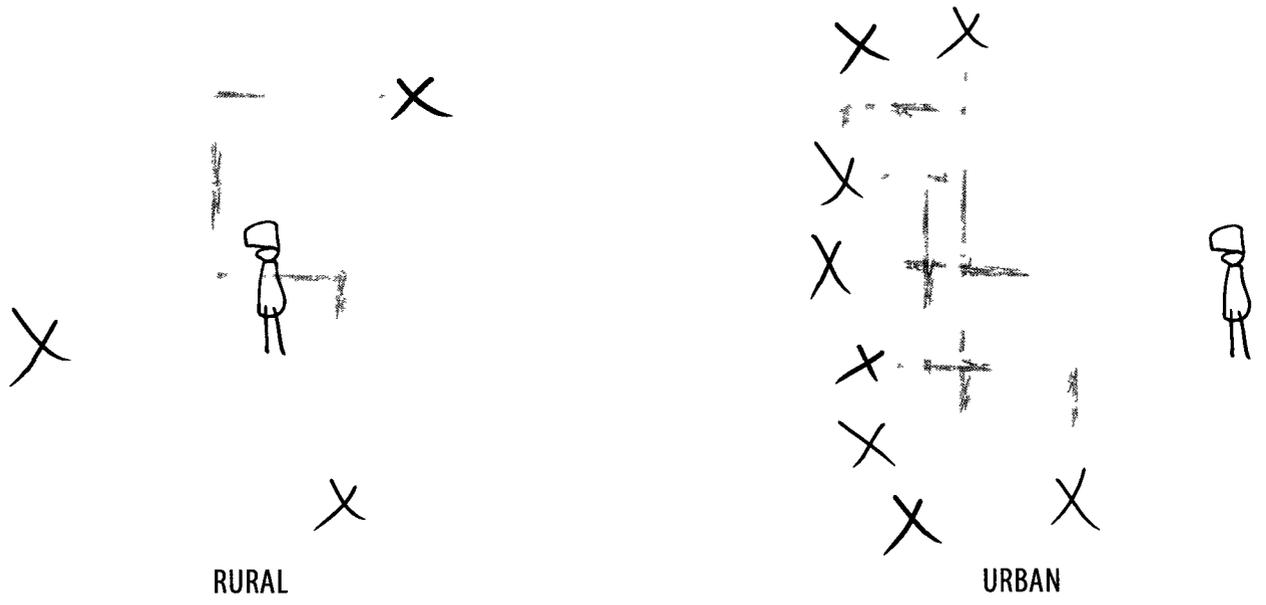


Fig 9
Typologies of the threshold

THE PERIPATETIC VERTEX

While the self is continuously re-defining the threshold, it is definitively the space with no limit between two parameters: *oneself* and a *peripatetic vertex*.

(1560–70; < Latin: a whirl, top (of the head), equiv. to *vert(ere)* to turn + *-ex* (s. *-ic-*) n. suffix; a point that can never be reached¹; Greek *peripatêtikos*: of walking; *nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*²)

Therefore, the terminus is always of interminable physical reach, like that of *tomorrow*.

The world of *tomorrow* is an inquest for the ephemeral and evanescent that was abandoned for the material. The phantasmagoria of space is fraught with phantasmagoria of time; the collective memories etched into the pavement of yesterday's city. It is the inevitable duality of history which refers to both directions temporally, but for the threshold, the changes in *progress* converges the space until *tomorrow* into a *latent threshold*, such is the act of becoming lost within it. Consider the covered passageways of Paris which became a disparate tale of Walter Benjamin:

« Benjamin's Parisian passage, the central figure of his interpretation of the nineteenth century as the prehistory of the twentieth: these emblematic spaces haunt their texts, symbolizing every aspect of the nomadism, the consumer fetishism, and the displaced individualism of modern life in the great cities. Kracauer's often cited observation, « Spatial images [*Raubilder*] are the dreams of society. Wherever the hieroglyphics of these images can be deciphered, one finds the basis of social reality, » accurately captures the special nature of these spatial evocations: like hieroglyphs, and their modern counterparts, dreams, these spaces stand ready to be deciphered. »³



Fig. 10
The Passage Choiseul, 1908.

1. vertex. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Retrieved August 12, 2011.
2. Aquinas, T., 1256–1259. *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 2 a. 3 arg. 19.
3. Vidler, A., 2000, p. 66.

Benjamin's *Arcades Project* allows for both historical comprehension and fragmented consciousness, but the face of Janus⁴ (whom is looking forward and to the past) is revealed throughout the text—the passages were borne from the fruits of industrialisation and new constructive principles of iron architecture, or in other words, from technological progress which in turn threatened the existence of the arcades as well, the very source of its poetic nostalgia. Entwined with the longing for long times, the threshold splits into endless wandering in unfolded time which conversely includes simultaneity and succession.

The arcades shifted the gaze of consumption from *onto* the streets to *within*—both inside architectural construction yet open to the stars—initially to provide sanctuary from the weather and noise of carriages that was a part of outdoor strolling and window shopping, but an alternative universe for commerce followed the *flânerie*⁵ into the panoramic tour of the arcades. The glass womb which it created asserts the utopian dimension of enclosing its pedestrians from the torrid elements of the real world, and facilitating the desire for pleasure and consumption.

The traditional planning of medieval cities has changed from its rationalist, politically-minded models into chaotic density, as if it were *escargot* sprawling across the landscape leaving urbanity in its residue. Paris, prior to 1853, existed as individual *quartiers* aligned only by public thoroughfares—it was not until the fated Haussmannisation which implemented the Napoleonic system of major boulevards. The approach of whom Baron von Haussmann took to consolidating the Parisian communes were likened to a railway engineer—direct routes cutting across the terrain along a major axis « to avoid any curve invisible to the eye and unnoticeable to the foot »⁶. The comparable cuts of both railway and the boulevard negate the purpose of the *flânerie*—where narrative journeys are the meta-material for exploration, as well as the nebulous nature of « destination » was bound by time, forming new sociabilities. The unfamiliar transport and communication technologies revolutionised the way of living, while the



Fig. 11
The god Janus, beardless, Roman coin; in the
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

4. Janus is figure in ancient Greek mythology, representing the duality of future and past, transitions and beginnings, coming and goings.

5. The noun, *flâneur*, is from the French "stroller" or "loiterer", though romanticised in its subsequent use as well as in the writings of Charles Baudelaire, Georg Simmel, as well as Guy Debord.

6. Fournel, V., 1865. *Paris nouveau et Paris futur*. p.40

scale and industrialisation of the modern city was conjugated with the pressures of modulating itself in tandem. The sudden metamorphosis of the city stripped the locale from the locals. The Haussmann Renovations kept its agenda of hygiene and spacious boulevards, but also twisted the meaning of « Renovation » from a notion of *restoration* into *demolition*.

Pedestrians were to conform to the new surroundings of vast openness, and the *flâneur* became tasked as retrieving the cultural idiosyncrasies of modernity and translating the memories that lay between new structures. Systematic demolition quickly blurred the distinction between original and reproduction: the Paris of today is a heralded landscape which disregards its former incarnation as any more splendid. The collective memory, or the romantic intoxication during the time of Baudelaire⁷, inevitably surrenders to the establishment of *modernity*.

.

Today railway travel is a token of antiquity with its purpose depreciated into freight. If the introduction of the railway compels changing not only individual perceptions, but the socio-cultural conditions that permeated everyday living.

The advent of the steam engine gave force to multiplicity, while propelling a Utopian promise of speed and production. It seemed that city blocks had entire metamorphosis with every glance, too rapidly changing and setting forth an estrangement that was compounded with the bewilderment of perceiving endless landscapes at a velocity previously unknown.

Gone are the epochs of mechanisation, modernisation and romance—velocity is the chief as it blurs physical existence into projection, where inhabitants become the fugitives of the metropolis—quartered on an endless ribbon of asphalt. Can it be said the swelling city, the place of citizenry, is the one that has fled away? Or is it the self that is forever wandering at a speed in discord to the body? Do we move in the city, or does the city move within us?

⁷ Baudelaire was a major French poet living in Paris from 1821 to 1867, expressing the changing beauty of Paris at the onset of industrialisation, as well as coining the term 'modernity' in which describing the fleeting emotions of the urban landscape that Benjamin writes extensively on in *The Arcades Project*.

Our modern cities condemn, consume and reject its' inhabitants—subsequently with the instantaneous modes of movement and inhabitation, the acceleration of modern life instils a fragmentation of existence. This phenomenon is a common occurrence for the fugitive—trapped within the liminal space of change and creation.

Benjamin's explorations had an « emphasis on a distinctive temporality of progress that saturates all of modernity's cultural products »⁸ which were focused dialogue between the street and arcade, while Kracauer explored the hotel lobby as an extension of street life and a punctuation of being where its autonomous nature allows for manufactured desires. This microcosm epitomises the anonymity and fragmentation of modern life, where mobility, identity and desire carousel on material exchange in a space of indifference. At the time of these observations, the suspensions of perception were prey at an incommensurable rate as the landscape of Europe was transformed by the introduction of the steam engine. Along with it, the concept of velocity and time.

Kracauer's threshold was composed of disjunctive memories that were difficult to map as it geometrically existed as points rather than the linear arcades of Paris. His analysis of the hotel lobby (*Hotelhalle*) is similar to which of the transport stations, in which its attempt to transcend its place of temporality. « For its part, hotel management contributed to the widespread perception of the lobby as a site of mobility and desire by actually marketing narrative possibility. the hotel was frequently promoted as a place where « things happen » »⁹

The complexities of the social diseases has an equivalent parallel in prevailing metropolis. While technological advancement has transformed the wholeness of the urban experience, coupled with the ease of global access, the airport terminal is the twenty-first century lobby as a suspension of one's threshold, or ad interim limbo.

The advent of the steam engine transformed the landscape of Europe in the early 1900s, bypassing the organic limits of speed and capacity. The socio-cultural effects of being introduced *time* and *panorama* had erupted in the intersection between information

8 Ferris, D. S., 2004. *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 97.

9 Katz, M., 1999, p. 139.

and urban space. In the same way, the same pressure upon the mind inflates with the ubiquity and ease of accessibility to air travel and digital informational technologies

.

Now confronted with the boundless disposition of the jet, the urban space of the city is never left, but rather contained in a capsule space, perhaps an *unspace*, of threshold in limbo. If the railroad journey was ever boundless, shapeless and delimited by the arrival hall¹⁰, then the airport is the living crisis to this notion, whereby « organically embedded in nature as it was, that technology, in its mimetic relationship to the space traversed, permitted the traveller to perceive that space as a living entity »¹¹

The aeroplane in many ways compounds space into minutiae. The bourgeois idea of communicative spaces available in coach travel which digressed into the forced face-to-face arrangement of the train compartment further isolates air passengers into embarrassment and avoidance. In particular, the occupancy of front-facing seats which aisles stretch along the interior dissolves the conversation of travelling. The breeding of isolation is induced with self-forgetfulness—the company along the aisle is more embarrassment than pleasure, most of which to the window-seat passenger increasingly shameful in proportion with each additional apology to go relieve oneself.

The aeroplane is a peripatetic vertex where it is always moving, transcending and changing course, yet the traveller is still, while always beginning and ending at the same *point-of-threshold*, the airport. This point is its internal simulacra¹² of the city, creating bounds that are neither within or outside of its city proper.

Airports today, with marketing desires and freedom, promote the threshold as a point of change, but it is beyond the immigration desk where it is a void for waiting, and surrogate from its more attractive parts, the simulacra of living.

The labyrinth of the city blocks which once bore the shadows that allowed for details

10 Schivelbusch, W, 1986, p. 174

11 Schivelbusch, W, 1986, p. 36

12 Baudrillard, J, 1981, p. 21



Fig. 12

Mehran Karimi Nasser, a stateless person stuck in transit for 16 years, sits among his belongings at Terminal 1 of Roissy Charles De Gaulle Airport, north of Paris, Wednesday Aug 11, 2004.

to appear were now undressed in the open air. Benjamin writes: « ... the crowd is the latest and most unfathomable labyrinth in the labyrinth of the city »¹³ that despite the nakedness of the streetscape, the labyrinthine quality of the modern city is inherent; unconsciously, the collective memories embedded within the previous fabric is translated and relayed to each generation.

13. Scholem, G , and Adorno, T.W. eds , 1994. *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910–1940* (trans. M.R and E.M. Jacobson). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 557.

ARCHITECTURAL EXERCISE _ 1

This exercise dwells primarily on the city labyrinthine, the simultaneous attraction and repulsion of the crowd that one inhabits. A network of connections leaping over a highway, stretching into the sky with great agility, avoiding a cloud of invisible obstacles. The structure is a polar array of planar voronoi made from a set of points within a cubic boundary. The axis that these planes are rotated on represents the flight path, and the structure reaches out to embrace while it contributes to the metamorphosis of the passenger.

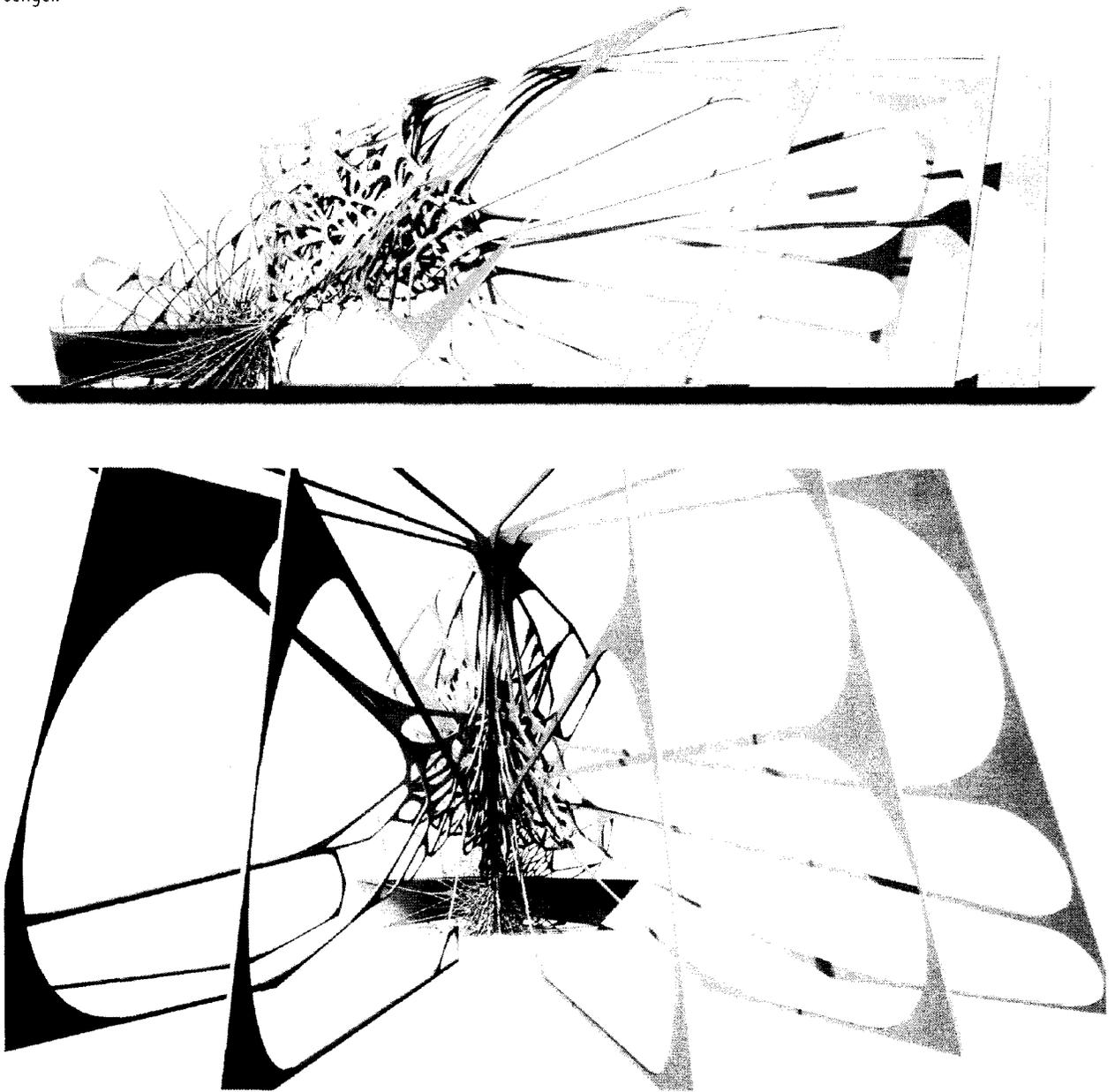


Fig. 13, Fig. 14

« By the First World War, *metropolis* had come to imply both a physical site and a pathological state which, for better or for worse, epitomized modern life »¹

« The only military idea that requires continuity of ideas, then, is the logistical project of the urban fortress »²

PSYCHO-PATHOLOGIES OF THE METROPOLIS

A chaotic birthing from the presence of control and enchantment—the metropolis that is known as dense organic inhabitation is a guise to a territory of icons and residue. An example can be noted from China's impatience when the pressures of high-speed modernisation is found in the wake of its construction: city blocks reduced to demolition sites with crumbled stones waiting for what feels like an eternity. Grasping at its long-awaited position in the global market, China proudly displays her new face, no holds barred, at the 2001 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 Shanghai Expo. The prominent displays of wealth and advancement are traded up from the cultural history that existed in *hútòng* and *lilòng*³. Although these historic structures were able to survive the Cultural Revolution—to China their symbolism is fraught with outdated thinking and impeding the natural progression of technological advancement and prosperity.

That is the natural history of the urban form—a skyline that is constantly effaced for another, with city blocks that begin to disappear just before familiarity takes root.

1 Vidler, A., 2000, p. 26

2 Virilio, P., 1977, p. 21

3 *Hútòng* (胡同) and *lilòng* (裡弄) are the prominent urban housing typologies of areas surrounding Beijing and Shanghai, respectively. They take the form of connecting alleys to stone gate courtyard residences of Mongolian origin. The most well-known example of *hutong* is the Forbidden City in Beijing, while *lilòng* can be encountered in central Shanghai.

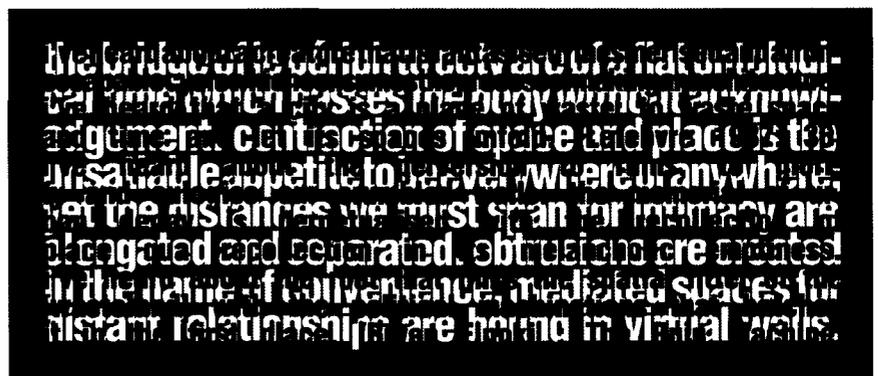


Fig 15

« the bridge of le périph to cctv are of a flat ontological time which passes the body without acknowledgement contraction of space and place is the insatiable appetite to be everywhere or anywhere, yet the distances we must span for intimacy are elongated and separated obtrusions are created in the name of convenience, mediated spaces for distant relationships are bound in virtual walls »

« The French word *vif*, “lively”, incorporates at least three meanings: swiftness, speed (*vitesse*), likened to violence—sudden force, abrupt edge (*vive force, arête vive*), etc —and to life (*vie*) itself to be quick means to stay alive (*être vif, c’est être vie*)⁴ »

From a continuous line to fragmented points, the modern fortification of a city relies on its radars and closed-circuit surveillance. To shift this lens inwards, inhabitants become fugitives without recourse. Particularly in the Chinese context and contradictions that besiege—capitalist/communist, beggared/wealthy, historical/modern—increasing the breadth of social, economic and political gaps harden class differences and fuels the sense of the *other* as a malevolent imposition or obstacle. When ambitions are extreme and riding on unprecedented velocity, it gives impetus to unmanageable socio-political turbulence swelling across the country.

While Vidler (2000, 24) incriminates the metropolis for hosting numerous phobic conditions with « diseases that took their place within the general epistemology of Beard’s neurasthenia and Charcot’s hysteria, but with a special relationship to their supposed physical causes »⁵, it misguidedly attributes the maladies to the spatial circumstances but rather how the self approaches changes in velocity without the appropriate adjustments in acceleration.

4 Virilio, P., 1977, p. 47

5 Vidler, A., 2000, p. 25

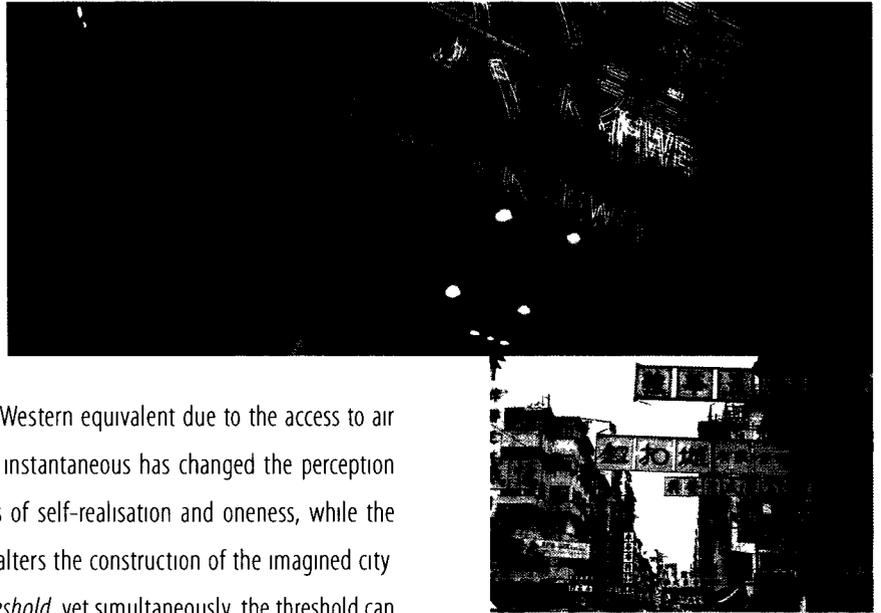


Fig 16, 17
Street signs in Hong Kong

China's modernisation is distinct from its Western equivalent due to the access to air travel and the internet. The shift to the instantaneous has changed the perception of how one approaches the city in terms of self-realisation and oneness, while the speed and frequency of travel ultimately alters the construction of the imagined city. The destination no longer requires the *threshold*, yet simultaneously, the threshold can be indulged in without the need for destination.

If China represents adjustments to new normals of speed, then Hong Kong is one resultant of a similar process. It is the epitome of the informational deluge, flooding the streetscape with neon signs, symbols and jumbo screens—as if the pavement itself was ebullient and with each step furthering admission. Though the nature is uncontrollable emergence, it is still what confirms its urbanity and its identity (or confirms its irresolution). But if one begins to recognise the militarisation of overlapping spaces into continuously deterritorialising and reterritorialising places, then it allows for the potentials of the spatial imaginary without the burden of the urban chaos.

Street hawkers, or more specifically *dai pai dong*⁶ has its origins as ad hoc open-air food stalls—selling traditional snacks including congee, noodles, rice and buns—which could not afford the licensing of a legitimate restaurant. After the Second World War, the initiative to hygiene introduced a license particularly for these hawkers, and to maintain order amongst the cluttered ferry piers.

6 Though the current term for street-stall hawkers is 大牌檔 (literally « big license stall »), the more traditional term is 為食碼頭 (« foodie/gourmet ferry pier »). This is appropriate speculation that the hawkers would gather on ferry piers to attract travellers connecting to the ferry and/or tram lines.

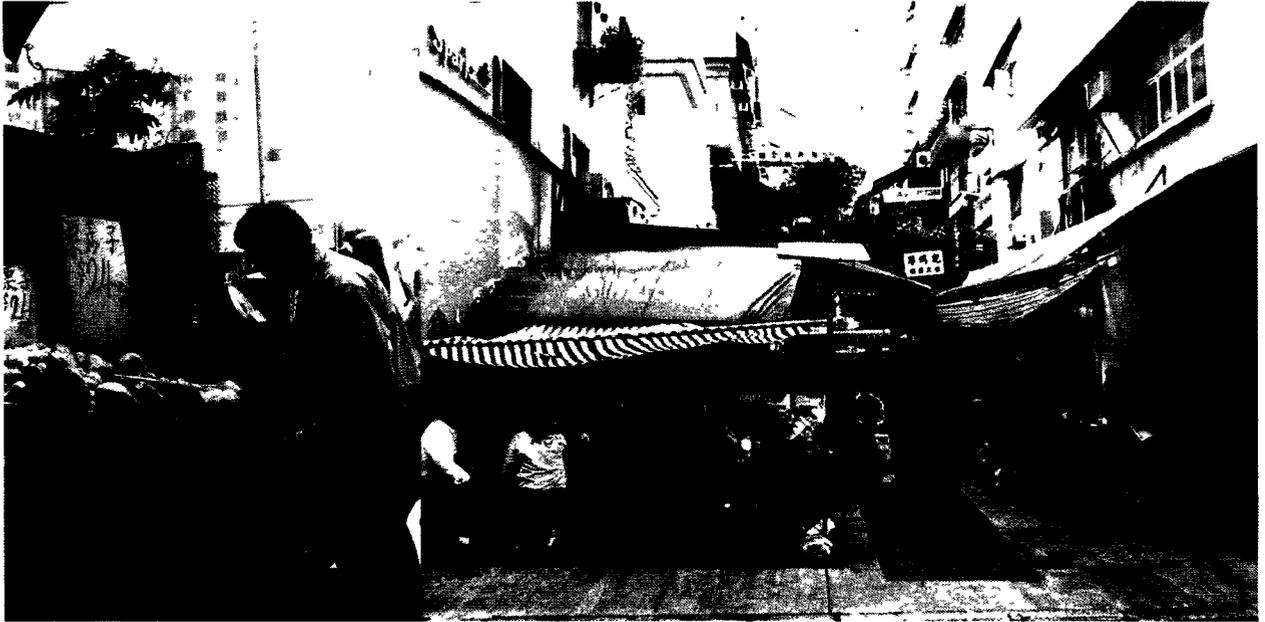


Fig. 18
Roasted yam and chestnut stall

Fig. 19
Popular *dai pai dong* in Central district

The *dai pai dong* encapsulates a sensation that is undeniably impetuous; the perpetual shuffling between food, person, and plastic stools amid nearby traffic inflecting the drone of the crowd. The immediacy of the event draws one in as if the partaking of the experience can fleet away within mere moments; an ambience that may not happen again in the same way, time or place. While a nuisance in high-congested areas, street hawking exhibits the abundant opportunities for impromptu street commerce which contributes to the economic vitality which describes Hong Kong today. Standing fifth in the world for highest cost of living⁷, street hawking is the threshold into commerce without the high overhead costs, the same way public markets act as incubators for small businesses.

As *dai pai dong* quickly evolved from 1950s as a place of social gathering and authentic spirit of flavours, the Hong Kong government has stopped issuing *dai pai dong* licenses since 1983 in effort to address rising concerns with « street beautification ». The number of licensed *dai pai dong* has now dwindled to only twenty-eight⁸. In an attempt of preservation, municipal centres have been established within every district for wet market stalls, while hawkers are organised on the second floor of the « Cooked Food Centre ». In defiance, surreptitious canteens have sprouted within shopping centres, sprawling into lift lobbies during late evenings to tend to the peckish crowds.

7 Hong Kong Statistics 2008 estimate Census and Statistics Department The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Retrieved 8 June 2009. <http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/>

8. 立法會：「大牌檔文化承傳政策」動議辯論發言全文, HKSAR Government, 23-11-2005.

<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200511/23/P200511230294.htm>

It is the kaleidoscope of different cultures that allows Hong Kong to be so compelling in its clutter of residual spaces. The reclamation of public spaces exist in all fronts of life, the Filipina domestic helpers which crowd Foster's HSBC⁹ Headquarters on their Sunday holiday, the illegal roof-top housing for migrant workers, as well as grandmas having no qualms to expanding their laundry lines to the footbridges.

The quality of spaces is not merely a place, but is in itself its own character and body. It is an organism which mutates and permeates on its own accord and upon its own generators. It is not a destination which embodies the experience upon arrival, but *faire une expérience* of quotidian life, as Ballantyne describes:

« The point is that the affects are produced, and they are real, but they are not produced by the building acting alone. They are produced when the building and the person come into contact, and people are 'prepared' in different ways by their life experiences, including their education (the French word is more evocative: their '*formation*', which could be translated as 'training'). A building, like any work of art, is a bloc of sensations and affects. An encounter is an experience, an experiment. The two English words 'experience', 'experiment' are one '*expérience*' in French (*avoir une expérience*—to have an experience, *faire une expérience*—to make an experiment) so in the Deleuze-and-Guattari-world, life's experiences are also always experiments »¹⁰ (italics added)

The ambivalence of the local identity that persists on tradition/modernity invading and encroaching upon one another is dwarfed by the cultural myriad that contributes to the variegated shifting of the streetscape. In the city that is imagined and reified, the explicit marking of people by way of language, race and ceremony is identifiable territorialisation that is brought about inherently. As well, districts of the city itself are marked by their general character: the financial locus, the trendy shopping district, the English-speaking quarters, or the hippie island spot. The nature of being involves constructions of complexities, most obvious are the physical symbols of currency or citizenship as a representation of ideas and statistics based on a collective understanding. The profusion of signs into seemingly meaningful categories allow informatics to expand its domain over the individual. If the city is accumulated from transitory spaces, then every person within is a fugitive. And in identifying with or being marked by a set of particulars, the taxonomy of the fugitive generates itself.

9 Abbreviated from "Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation"

10 Ballantyne, Andrew *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects* New York: Routledge, 2007, p47

« I do not think we can talk in terms of surrender to complexity, but in terms of different ways of dealing with this complexity. In a sense, we should no longer speak of war in the city, but of war of the city, by the city. The city has become no longer the locus, but the apparatus of warfare »¹

WAR IN THE CITY BECOMES WAR OF THE CITY BY THE CITY

The city is in mutual construction with warfare and technology. It only becomes more apparent in contemporary military action when battles are fought within the realms of everyday life—in the subways, museums, supermarkets, and living rooms. War, like Benjamin's whore, is a duality in itself.

« The commodity clearly provides such an image as fetish. The arcades, which are both house and stars, provide such an image. And such an image is provided by the whore, who is seller and commodity in one »²

« From the eighteenth century onwards, the female figure as allegory is increasingly concerned with ways of knowing modernity and the experience of the modern metropolis, and the woman (in particular, the prostitute) serves as the decisive metaphor for the city's enigmatic (if not desirable) Otherness, unregulated movements and chaotic flows of commodities and bodies »³

Conversely, if the city is an organic body in desecration, the war that is driven upon it maintains two images: first, the city is ultimately driven by the logics of the marketplace, with the manifestation of war, and second, the embattled is destroying the very territory that it seeks to gain possession of.

1 Weizman, E., 2003

2 Benjamin, W., 1969, p. 170

3 McCabe, J., 2004, p. 154

Cities have always been subjects of conflict, and military logistics readily permeate the daily consciousness. The most banal devices of households (in developed nations)—such as daily weather updates, digital photography and multimedia communications—are borne from the bowels of military research. Technological progress with the pretence of weaponry is nothing strange to speak of. The world map has lost its breadth, time has contracted to a capsule. In this generation, cities pose a greater security risk than ever. Geographer Ken Hewitt is in accord:

« There is [...] a direct reciprocity between war and cities. The latter are the more thoroughgoing constructs of collective life, containing the definitive human places. War is the most thoroughgoing or consciously prosecuted occasion of collective violence that destroys places »⁴

If the medieval populace shielded their bounds with stone walls, the megalopolis is compelled to fracture it into point-based methods of security, save for the metaphorical wall such as *Le Périphérique*⁵ surrounding Paris or the Iron Dome over Israel. The inherent threat of a fragmented safeguard puts the city at risk—as the saying goes: *the bigger they are, the harder they fall*—the more substantial of its being, the bigger of a target it creates, and thus the higher of its wager in warfare. If a battle is triumphed by its claims and victories, then the megalopolis has no negotiation in the matter. This in mind, prudence becomes the responsibility of urban planning. One of the most significant impacts could be said of Paris under the rule of Napoleon I.

As one of the most significant transformations of the urban context, the *Haussmann Renovations* is both highly criticised and commemorated, as it both dismantled the romanticism of Baudelaire's city, yet providing the reigning perspective it has today—no matter the primary intention of securing against civil unrest. The Napoleonic ideals translated « *l'embellissement stratégique* » into destruction of the collective consciousness and inspired a revolution of urban strategies. The everyday life which acted freely in the shadows were shone upon in bright light and public scrutiny; neighbourhoods as interpersonal extensions of the home were exposed to the strangers' eyes.

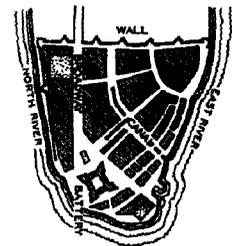
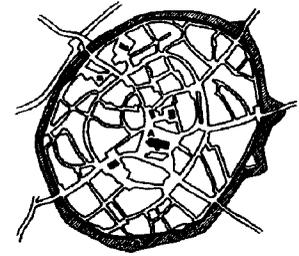


Fig. 20
Illustrations of Paris' walls

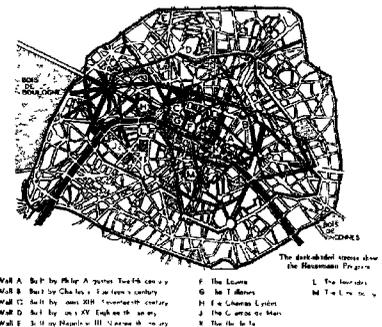


Fig. 21
Illustrations of Paris' walls

4. Hewitt, K., 1983, p. 258.

5. Frei Otto writes of the ring: « as far as defensive technology was concerned, it had already become useless. »⁵ Can it be agreed that the current political state of the ring is a defensive barrier from the urban proper to the banlieue, a mechanism that acts upon social dominance?

With sentiments aside, how quantifiable are the sacrifices made of the *Hausmann Renovations*, or rather, *Hausmann Evictions*?

The stratification that is implicit with urbanisation is most clearly evident in Parisian history. Hausmann's boulevards provided a stage for the bourgeois to see and to be seen, while labouring classes were swept aside to the *banlieue*. After the destruction of the city's last defensive enclosure, lining the Boulevards des Maréchaux, the impoverished held their existence in the scar of the Thiers Wall. Now in its place today is a metaphorical wall, a technological divide which simultaneously consumes and rejects its occupants, the Boulevard Péripherique. The defensive mechanics of modern urbanism has its progression in tandem with the identity of the city, security begins to focus upon all its inhabitants as anonymous people, as wars are no longer fought outside of the city, but within.

Security in its historical sense conjures the image of village gates, a method of protection and prevention of outsiders. While populations swelled beyond their borders, the meaning of the wall degenerates the more potent values: the multiple reincarnations of the walls around Paris, German separation of the Eastern Bloc instituted as a protection of socialist ideals, to the detainment of emigrants, and the Separation Barrier between Israel and Palestine as the physical embodiment of suspended ideologies, of simultaneous exception and detention.

With cities ever increasing in count and density, battlefields are drawn *into* the city, streets and homes—notably affirmed by ex-Iraqi foreign minister, Tariq Aziz:

« Some people say to me that the Iraqis are not the Vietnamese! They have no jungles or swamps to hide in. I reply, 'let our cities be our swamps and our buildings our jungles. »⁶

⁶ Bellamy C., 2003. If the cities do not fall to the Allies, there may be no alternative to siege warfare. *The Independent*, 28 March 2003.



Fig. 22
IDF creating a path through homes

This is followed suit by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) Commander Aviv Kohavi leading the operation in Nablus and the Bataala refugee camp that formed part of a larger operation known in Israel as « Defensive Shield », referring to a manoeuvre through walls and across the depth of the city as « inverse geometry », « the re-organization of the urban syntax by a series of micro-tactical actions »

The research and readings of the IDF is most peculiarly reminiscent of the architectural discipline: Deleuze, Matta-Clark, Tschumi, Bataille, Debord—and by translating into their own purposefulness, an engagement dubbed « Walking through Walls » which involved moving through the city by way of direct tunnelling through walls or moving vertically through floor and ceiling. The original typologies of circulation were abandoned in favour of using the existing fabric as a cloak, and seeing space as a dense mass to bore through, « like worms in apples »⁷.

While militarisation in definition is the act of assembly and preparedness for a state of emergency, applied to architecture, the « militarisation of space » becomes an urgent

7. Weizman, E, 2003, p 8.

activation of *spaces* into *places*. Therefore militarisation in its empirical sense conveys the notion of the *guerilla gardener* (or *guerilla-anything*) livening the streetscape or the contingent cordoned blocks from impromptu rioting.

The meaning of « guerilla gardening », even by name itself, is associated with political activism as it was coined in the 1970s by New York artist Liz Christy. It carries into the current context with its pejorative connotations, as Richard Reynolds of *guerillagardening.org* describes his actions as « [the] *illicit* cultivation » of land outside his ownership, and the « growing arsenal [] in the war against neglect and scarcity of public space ».

While this action in Japan offers a similar profit, the purpose of action is rooted in an entirely other definition, political in this state references the Latin *politicus*, « pertaining to polity, civil affairs, or government »—or in other words, a respectful duty towards neighbourly spaces by reclaiming the urban divide with apology to its aboriginal landscape. The moniker of « guerilla » is pacified by turning the meaning upon itself when catalysing its productive intentions.

These political actions are on the same platform. In abandoned spaces, there exists a dormancy that implies a toxic redundancy, ignored, unused, and unproductive. These occurrences can be found both outdoor and indoor, and at any plane—while militarisation calls these spaces to attention by activating these areas into utilisation and occupancy. This projects upon them a dual status of ownership and cupidity for enabling its potentials.

These potentials, or enabling of potentials, is the continual production between two conditions—Deleuze describes this as a *becoming*.

« [It] is not defined by points that it connects, or by points that compose it, on the contrary, it passes between points, it comes up through the middle, it runs perpendicular to the points first perceived, transversally to the localizable relation to distant or contiguous points [] neither one or two, nor the relation of the two, it is the in-between, the border or line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both »⁸

8 Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., 1980, p. 293

By virtue of the line of flight implicated between the threshold and the self, the characteristics of this *becoming* is a production of unique events activated to a *Gestalt*. The significance of *Gestalt*, however, is incumbent on the arrangement of its parts rather than the quantitative value of its *becomings*.

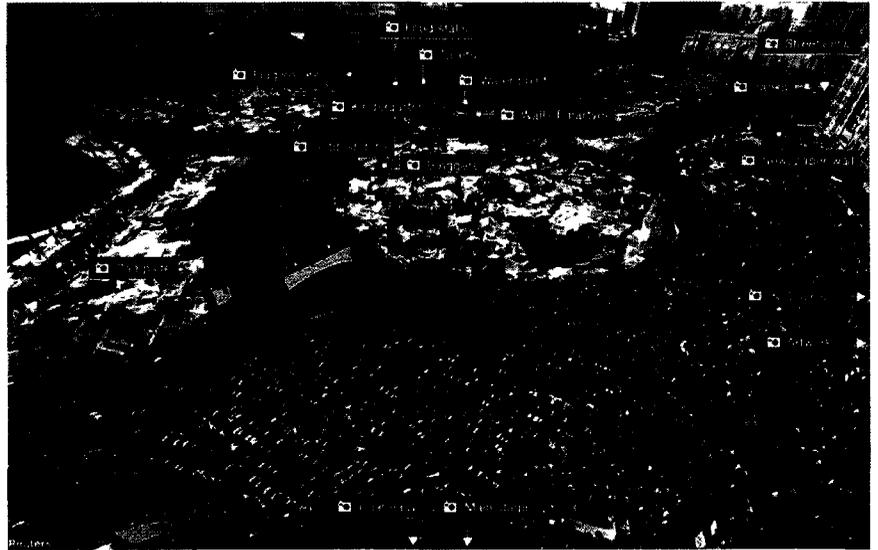


Fig. 23
« Egypt: The camp that toppled a president »

Militarisation with respect to street riots also have diverging intentions by casting the city as spectacle. It is common knowledge that rioting of the polity is either response or offence to the state; though it bears the potential for the state to formalise experiments in control—in reference to the G20 summit hosted by the city of Toronto, Canada, the state returns to a medieval provenance of raising security walls to protect the elite class and maintain buffer/separation spaces.

Conversely for the side of the polity, their force lies in the sheer mass of numbers. The Egyptian revolution has been gaining speed since January this year, and reached its peak when the civil resistance had swung its momentum towards more aggressive methods of protest.

Protesters were against the Mubarak regime, citing multiple political and social issues, including freedom of speech, police brutality and lack of free elections. The focal point of the demonstrations were located in Cairo's central Tahrir Square, revealed by way of the BBC World News⁹. Empty fast-food parlours were re-purposed into medical clinics;

9. Knell, Y., 2011. Egypt: The camp that toppled a president. *BBC News*, [online] 11 February. Available at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12434787>> [Accessed 27 March 2011].

the central plaza transformed to separate sleeping and prayer areas; volunteer doctors provided care for the injured; and while formal education was suspended during this period, demonstrators organised their own kindergarten for their children.

In the words of Samuel Johnson: « Our brightest blazes are commonly kindled by unexpected sparks », and like the *festival of experience* that unravels in unactive spaces, the *becoming* of Tahrir Square had been *militarised*, in orderly fashion, into a *communitas*.

The *becoming* of spaces into places are evident in the desire for mobilisation and collective ambition. Inspiration occurs willingly under duress, but what is the momentum for cities that are absent of war; i.e. the prototype/future city of Hong Kong?

« If a monument should be penetrated by the mob, it will be rapidly transformed into a place of passage, where everyone enters and exists, brings to and takes away. »¹⁰



Fig. 24
Filipina domestic helpers appropriating the ground
lobby of HSBC Headquarters in Hong Kong.

10. Virilio, P, 1977, p. 5. In the context of Goebbels during the Nazi occupation of Paris.

With applied Deleuzian methods of perceiving space, walled cities are no longer places of fixed boundaries and spaces. The rhizomatic structure of no beginning, end nor middle can be at its most rigorous in Kowloon Walled City.

The district began as a village built on Chinese *feng shui* principles, situated between mountains and water to bring harmony to all its inhabitants. By the 1970s, the original stone buildings had already mushroomed into high-rises for poor and illegal immigrants, and eventually evolving into its massive final form of solid 26,000 square metres, 14-stories high, with 33,000 people within.

The first strike against the city occurred during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong during World War II. The outer walls were dismantled to build the Kai Tak Airport, thus destroying the positive *feng shui* that was provided by the water. The vitality it once had was lost to its decrepit remains, bound to attract squatters and the other less fortunate. When the war had ended, it became the de facto asylum for post-war refugees. The shady history of Kowloon Walled City is not attributed to the poor, its « legacy of vice »¹¹ owes its libertine to its political anomaly—within British territory, but outside of British jurisdiction, very much like Berlin as geo-politically deviant. The Chinese also denied responsibility for this district, further propelling it into an anarchist enclave.

The physical transformations involved a multiplying organism as narrow bridges and tunnels were forced out of the overpopulated spaces, with separate buildings overlapping and fusing into one another. This yielded many makeshift access points with changes in slope and floor heights, which only added more to the tangle. Its lack of ordinance and sheer density allowed for a incalculable labyrinth, naturally unnavigable by strangers.

Unable to grow beyond its limits—both horizontal and vertical—the use of space within was completely dictated by its changing requirements. Store fronts or snack shops were separated by metal grilles rather than concrete walls—it allowed more space by displaying wares openly to the narrow path, while in the evening the shutters were rolled down for mahjong games to erupt.

11 Lambot, I, and Girard, G, 2007, p. 9

This is the nature of « militarisation of space », the epitome in which even the smallest gap holds potential. To confer with Deleuze « deterritorialisation indicates the creative potential of an assemblage. So, to deterritorialise is to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organisations »¹², militarisation can occur on all scales, planes, and forms.

The conditions of Kowloon Walled City is applicable to impelling militarisation within « everyday life »¹³ and comprehending the seamlessness of human events and spatial context. The struggle within the duality of historical threads knotted into modernised quotidian life fuels desire and romanticism towards the ingenuity of shanty towns and street stalls, the building of our moments which exist outside the limits and rigid boundaries of the State.

Can it be said that the evolution of the metropolis in its formal and spatial structure continues in a consistent method more akin to fortress urbanism? The *joie de vivre* that may unravel unexpectedly upon the pavement, borne of human connection and communication is overwhelmingly butted aside for the increasing privatisation and surveillance. Density pushes the population into taller skyscrapers, the urban fabric swelling at the sake of personal space—the freedom of interaction and spontaneity that is relegated to the unbound cyberspace becomes adapted to high-rise living, transforming the most domestic of spaces into a source of estrangement. If architecture such as the Parisian boulevards can be used to enforce narratives of authority, the (re-)militarisation of spaces can be viewed as a weapon used to enforce certain behavioural codes.

The quintessential wholeness of the streetscape is its purposefulness and its mobility as a public space. The characteristic discontinuity is what makes the experience of the pavement an alternative territory for non-physical spaces to occur. Architecture has the inherent quality of perceiving and understanding the non-physical networks which accumulate into cities, the formalist vocabulary in representation of space, public space, and perceived space allows the thresholds for us to work in, the alternative territories to use our psycho-spatial lenses to better understand how bureaucracy and surveillance are consumed, rationalised and inscribed as expressions of a deeper cultural pathos.

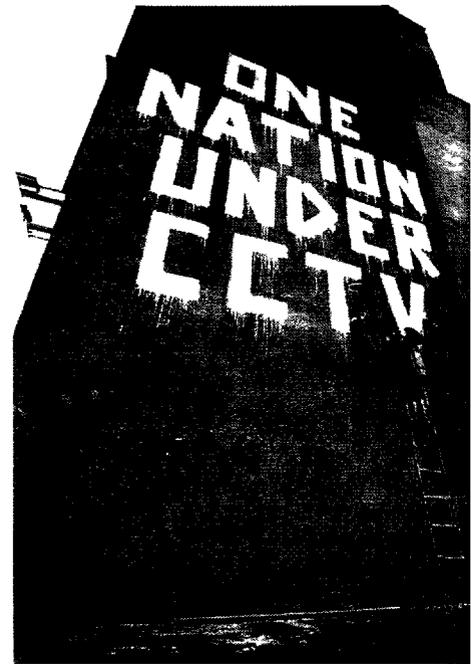


Fig 25
« ONE NATION UNDER CCTV » Banksy
graffiti in Central London

12 Parr, A , 2005, p 67

13 Lefebvre, H , 1971



Fig 26

ARCHITECTURAL EXERCISE __2

This exercise in the contemporary field of architecture sympathises with the parasitic nature of urbanism. This tension is the city's *modus operandi*, a particular perfume of both attraction and repulsion.

Refugees, migrants, and illegal immigrants are lost within the political system, belonging to no country. These peoples are prisoners of circumstance, relegated to the capacity of their threshold into a situation of involuntary status. Unsurprisingly, urbanisation is increasingly more favourable (or rather, more common) in the ever-growing cities.

The urban landscape in turn is loaded with signification and can be read on a multiplicity of levels from community and home to a place of anxiety, alienation, and as claustrophobic, agoraphobic, displaced and fractured.



Fig 27

The chaotic assemblage is represented by way of a loose 3D organisational envelope that is filled or exceeded to varying degrees. Inhabitable spaces are created from an offsetting where the surfaces are rebuilt by moving control points along the normal vector of the original curve, and thereby connecting the edges to the original surfaces. These surfaces are divided and solidified while offset circles or spheres remain concentric to the envelope.

It becomes a metaphor for the varying building heights in the metropolis, as applied to a curving surface, demonstrating an approximation of a whole that a fortress urbanism could represent.



Fig. 28

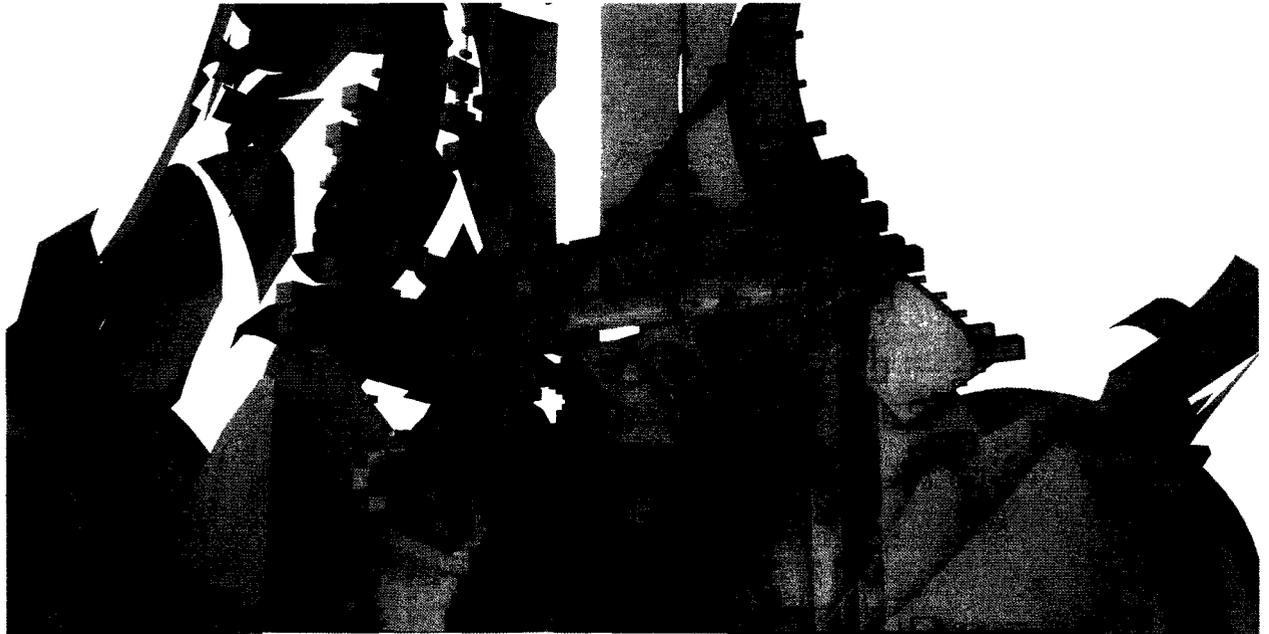


Fig. 29

« the city is a vital space in the emergence of new political practices. As a communications circuit, as a space where rights can be fought for, as a bulwark against authoritarian regimes [] a crucial environment in which political alterity can flourish [] city space is strategic terrain for those who can navigate the dialectic between everyday and formal political practice in pursuit of their political goals [] refugees and immigrants build their own forms of political meaning and act to redefine themselves as political subjects capable of making change »¹

PRISONERS OF CIRCUMSTANCE

Technological changes in the quality of public space makes it increasingly more evident that the urban realm is a temporary experience that is imploded by the changes in the social contract. The enjoyment of public space is normally governed by authority: public transportation, parks, or even the most mundane section of the pavement is under the responsibility of an organisation. In this respect, the city relinquishes itself as a home or collective space, but rather a temporary flow of people, information and commodities.

Digitalising the means of communication and the info-sphere questions the relationship of territory, identity, place and perception. While the urban has its social phenomena, the physical and informational mobilities are also a vital part of the metropolis. Technologies of convenience have been well-introduced into—or even replace—the common facets of living, while the complexities of acceleration build a volatile pressure upon the self. How does one ascertain the qualities of the self by way of the threshold within the presence of a virtual reality? How does relational space reconstitute the public life of the metropolis?

1 Sassen, S., 2007, p. 222

2 Grosz, E. A., 2001, p. 15

3 Virilio, P., 1977, p. 142

« the more speed increases, the faster freedom decreases »³

.

In the same way the photographic image reproduced the city while editing out the city life, the possibility of the virtual existence (as maintained by cameras, audio recorders and the internet) is an explosive force that is a neo-Haussmanisation, as he acknowledges the benefits of the Boulevard de Sebastopol in his *Mémoires*

« It meant the disemboweling of the old Paris, the quartier of uprisings and barricades, by a wide central street piercing through and through this almost impossible maze, and provided with communicating side streets, whose continuation would be bound to complete the work thus begun. The subsequent completion of the Rue de Turbigo made the Rue Transonain [symbolic capital of the barricades] disappear from the map of Paris! »⁴

A continuous cut through the metropolis that distinguishes the cityscape as wholly penetrable occurs simultaneously within the virtual network, evident by the ubiquitous nature of Google Street View. Digital networks are a chimera—their immaterial existence attempt to preserve urban virtues. On this landscape, there is no peripheral, no blur and no velocity but a living entity which reaches beyond the infinite. Accelerated urban expansion converged with informational mobilities—is the resultant a contextual convenience or the bedrock for urban panic? With no gauge for speed and space, while aggressively denying the self from the other, isolation is a plea for help.

Mass mobility and information inherently changes the nature of the producer and consumer. The proliferation of these technologies in the modern world are predominately guided by militant logistics: territorialisation, involving control, surveillance and tracking.⁵ The perception of space and identity, along with sociability is defined by something outside of everyday life, but rather a more political means with regards to territory and location.

3 Virilio, P., 1977, p. 142

4 Clark, 1999, p. 39 as cited in McQuire, S., 2008, p. 36

5 Lemos, A., 2010, p. 409

« The city is a difference machine insofar as it is understood as that configuration that is constituted by the dialogical encounter of groups formed and generated immanently in the process of taking up positions, orienting themselves for and against each other, inventing and assembling strategies and technologies, mobilizing various forms of capital, making claims to a space that is objectified as « the city » Neither groups nor the identities exist before the encounter with the city »⁶

If it is already understood that the city acts as « incubator for political change »⁷, then the imposition of the virtual network is a simulacra in the Deleuzian sense, as a opportunity to challenge ideals in which disparate elements are placed together in an intensive system and which its differences are of difference itself, by going around the limits of representation⁸ (as in the case of cinema and film)

If the concept of the virtual, the image and the cinematic is given the suspension of belief, then it can be understood that the capacities of extending the self is an infinite crisis of creating *smoothed space* within the info-sphere, while not moving at all This place of occupying and connecting metabolises a conceptual plane of coming and going, a digital flow of place or space Given the boundless capacity of movement and exploration, this ironic perspective is what suffocates its inhabitants where mobility and flow is taken prisoner by the limits of social control When immersed into the territory of Baudrillard's simulacra

« [] it is the reflection of a profound reality, it masks and denatures a profound reality, it masks the absence of a profound reality, it has no relation to any reality whatsoever, it is its own pure simulacrum »⁹

It radically shapes the relationship between the material and the image, in which the informational territory undermines the perception towards social control and surveillance

6 Isin, E. F., 2002, p. 49 cited in Sassen, S., 2007, p. 223. In *Being Political*, Isin develops a framework based on Foucault that analyses the historical re-appropriation of citizenship by marginal groups, making the distinction that there is an ontological difference between *political* and *politics*

7 Sassen, S., 2007, p. 224

8 Deleuze, G., 1968, p. 69

9 Baudrillard, J., 1981, p. 6

•

« In this new perspective devoid of horizon, the city was entered not through a gate nor through an *arc de triomphe*, but rather through an electronic audience system — telematics replaces the doorway »¹⁰

When the virtual exists as a perpetual threshold, it lacks not only the boundaries which denote inclusion, place and temporality, but as well the metaphysical boundaries which occur within the social interactions of everyday life that is not only between separate groups or individuals, but the relative process of the relationship to the self and the definition of it

Citizenship is a boundary that gathers the political processes with the identity of the self, however poses as a privilege bestowed by the State upon people within its borders. Collectively asserting certain beliefs to a distinctive group, the source of its political theory is a banality which requires no more action in order to define one's political character

The Ghost Airport in identifying its users simply as fugitives is symbolic of the notion that every individual is responsible for their own threshold, without faithful dependence upon a single identity but an emergence of difference in the point of encountering with the other

« [Boundaries are] threads of difference that emerge inside groups or fields and how they are linked to minute changes in identities or beliefs on the ground [] tensions between groups usually circumscribed by national or regional boundaries now reinsert themselves into urban space, reconfiguring the political character of the city. The key to understanding boundaries in this respect is not to think of them as territorial encasements but as lines of difference that emerge or fade »¹¹

10 Virilio, P, 1991, pp 11–13

11 Sassen, S, 2007, p 226

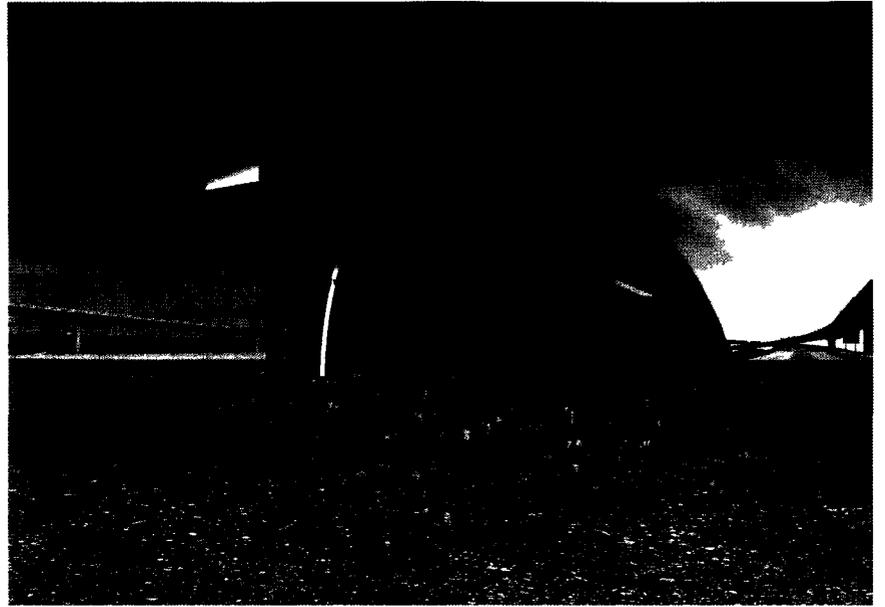


Fig 30
Front approach of the *bureaucrat*

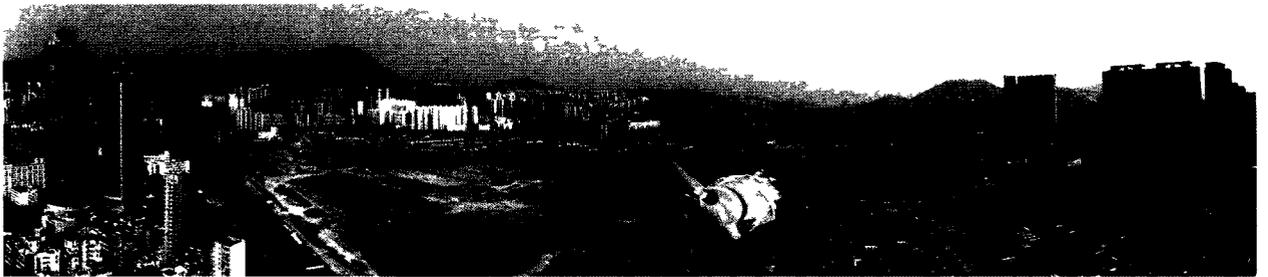
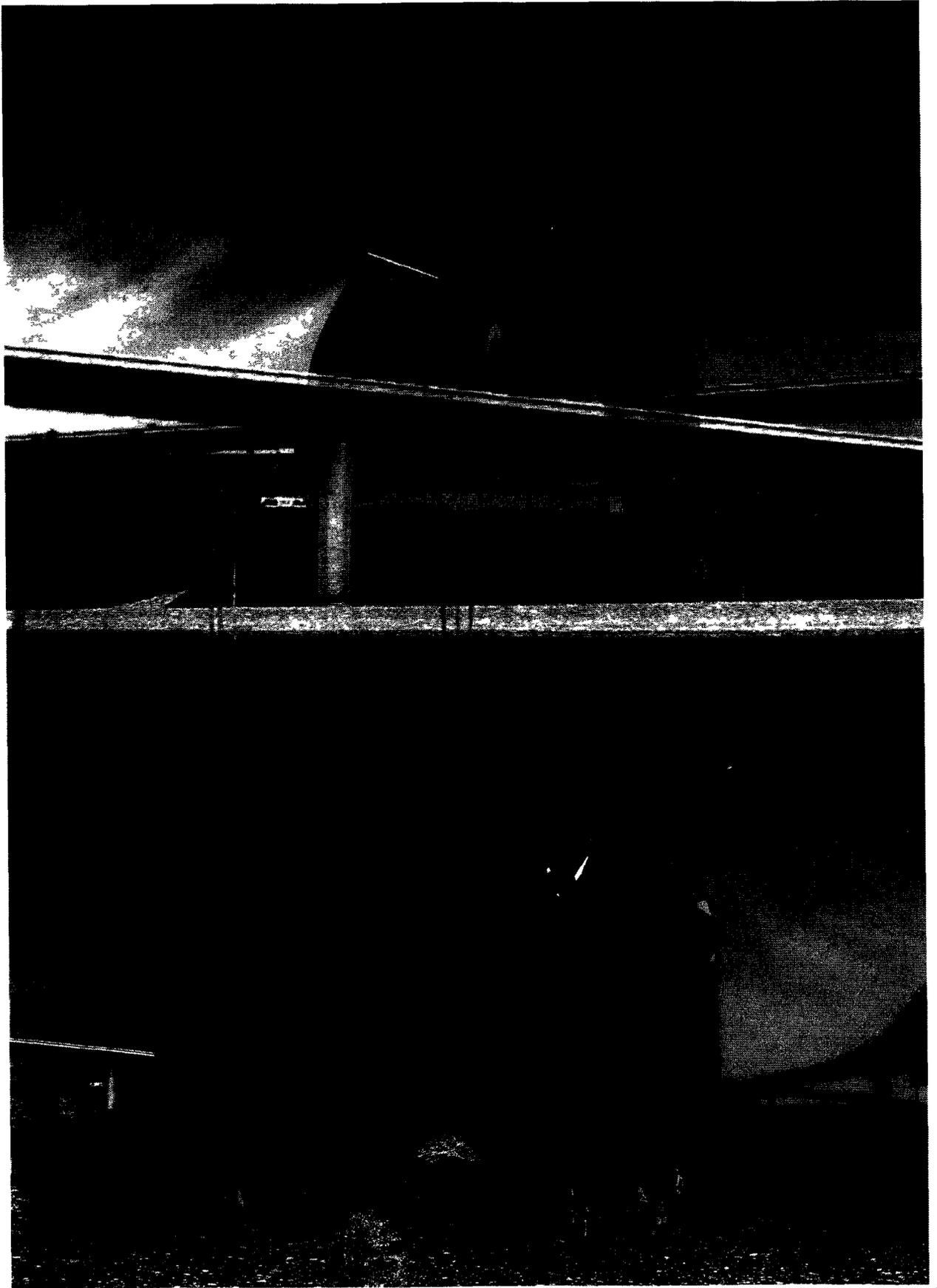


Fig 31
Aerial view with the airstrip promontory highlighted in red and Prince Edward Road highlighted in purple

ARCHITECTURAL EXERCISE 3

This exercise finds grounding in a far more pragmatic and symbolic relation between parties on the site, namely the bureaucrat and the fugitive, who are housed in the bureaucracy and militarised threshold respectively. The fugitives exist on the site to militarise and alter their own reality, by conjoining and separating into a serpentine network that is constantly evolving.



(previous page)

Fig 32, view from northwest across Prince Edward Road

Fig 33, view from east

The material system of the housing that is provided to the fugitives is a pipe structure connected by a universal node that can achieve any angle of connection, draped over with a concrete-impregnated cloth which is easy to construct, self-supporting, and can be cut and altered when cured to accommodate electrical or plumbing fixtures as well as openings for windows and doors. The purpose of an easy construction is manifold—first at the most basic level it gives the people access to shelter quickly, eliminating one's need to be exposed to the elements. It allows a user group to find a sense of achievement at being able to construct something so quickly with so few specialty tools at their disposal, which instigates a widespread motivation amongst them. Finally it reduces the value that one places on his dwelling and keeps him from becoming rooted in his situation—this is necessary because if one's situation becomes undesirable in any way (for instance if a murderer moves in next to him) then it must not be considered an obstacle for one to pick up his belongings and build a new shelter. In this way, the fugitives can avoid internal conflict and ensure for each other that no one becomes trapped in any particular situation.

In contrast the bureaucracy is a looming figure that dominates the site, providing and revoking license at will, against which the fugitive network constantly throws itself in the desire to expand and be free. As a governing body it assumes complete control of its jurisdiction while providing the fugitives with the tools and resources to do what they must. If the bureaucracy is the plane crash, the threshold cut short, then the fugitives are the surviving passengers, those with the unfettered desire to develop their threshold and control their own situation. The bureaucrat however is the parasite that demands to be fed, reaping an arbitrary percentage of one's achievement and dictating the limits of one's actions. The two meet on the site in a precarious balance, an agile runner tied to a dead-weight.

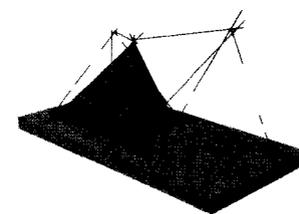
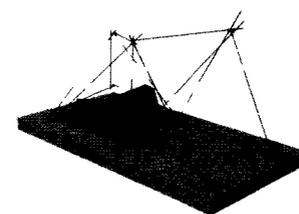
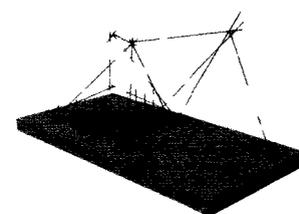
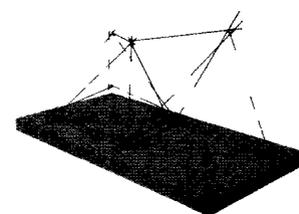
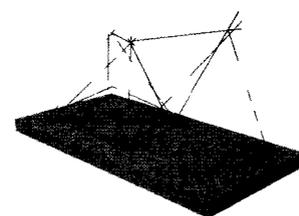


Fig 34

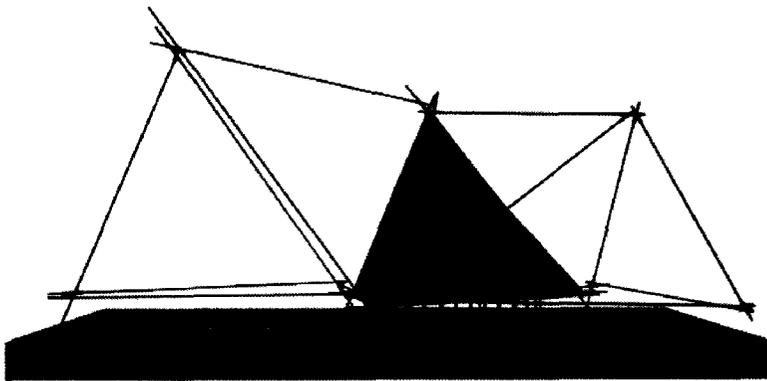


Fig. 35
Overall view of housing unit

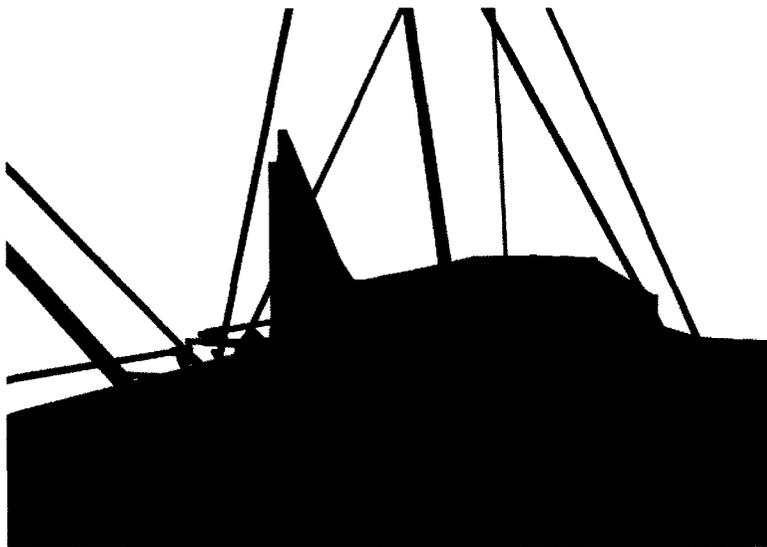


Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Fig. 38
Detail of pipe connection

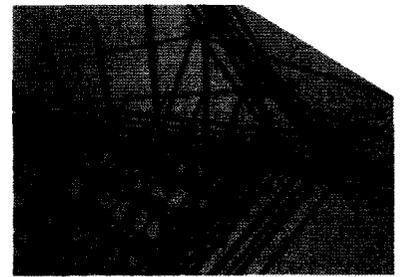


Fig. 39

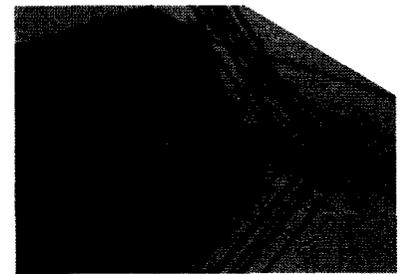


Fig. 40

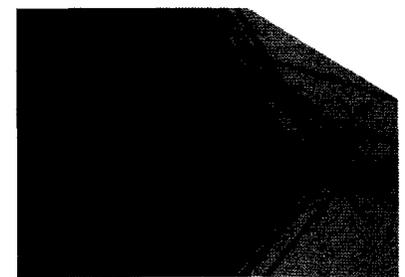
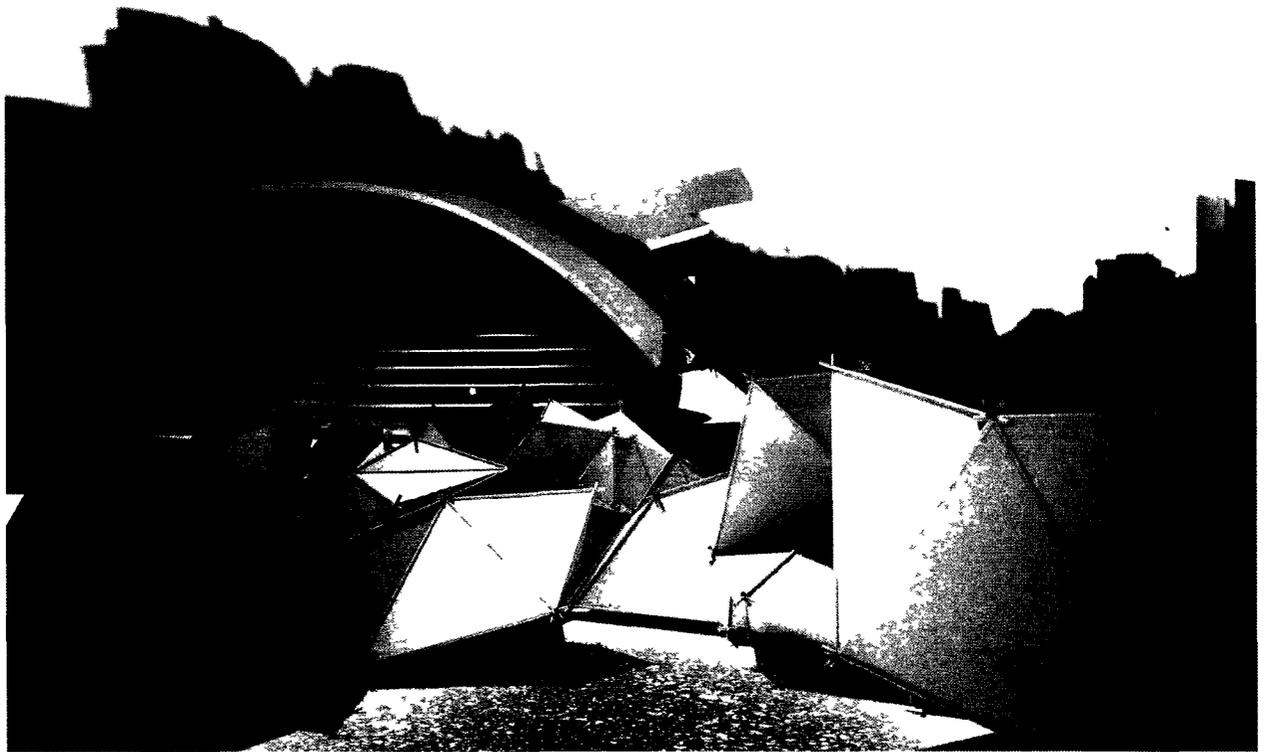
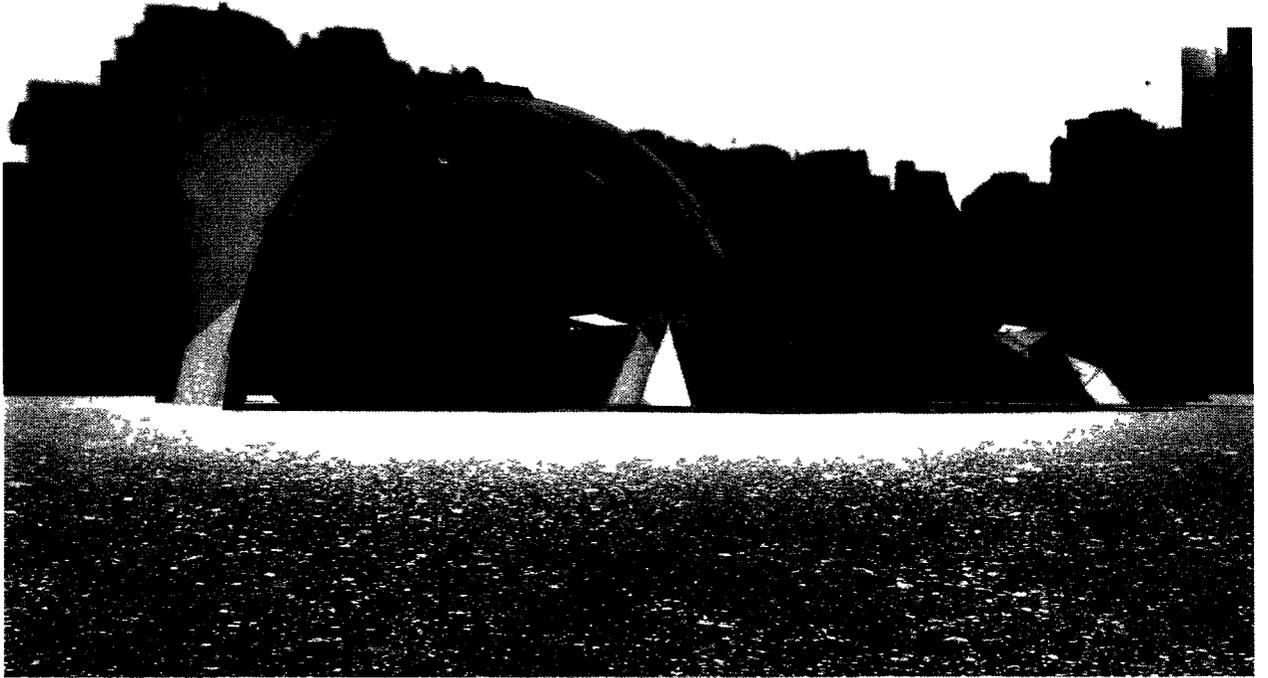


Fig. 41



(previous page) Fig. 42, Fig. 43

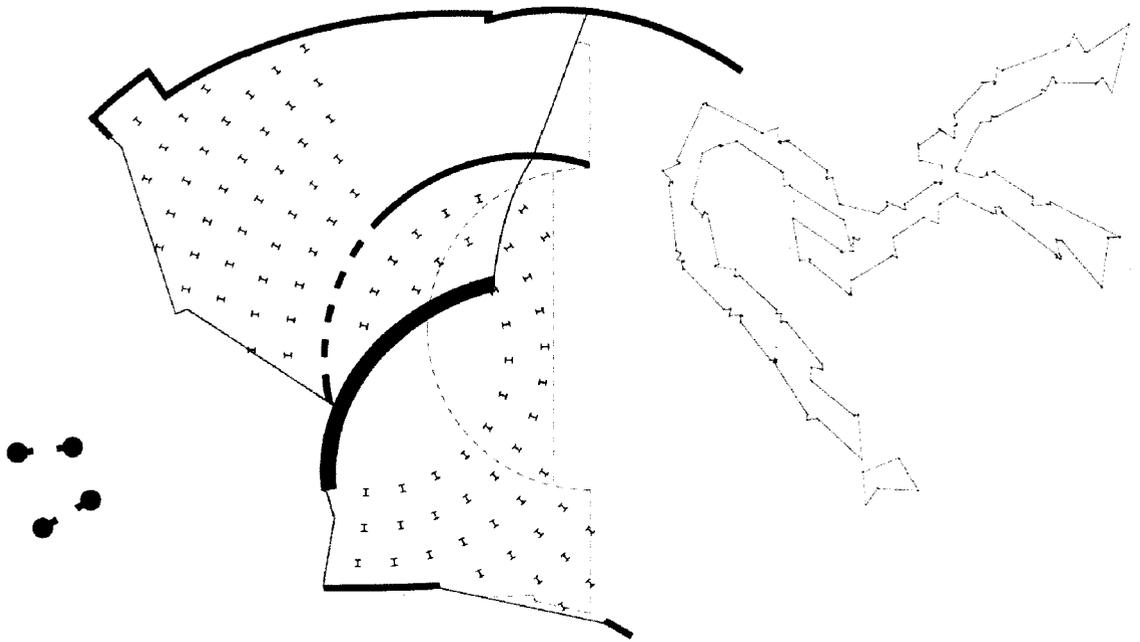


Fig. 44
plan

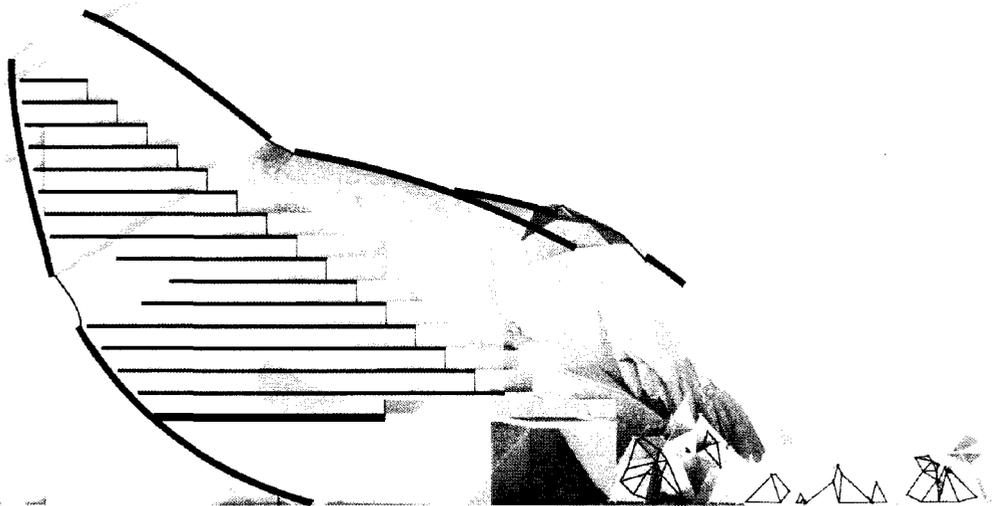


Fig. 45
longitudinal section



Fig 46

PROJECT (N.)/PROJECT (V.)



Fig 47

REFERENTS

The Ghost Airport is the architecture of endless possibility, facilitating the activation of action and exploration where program is not strictly dictated. The referents that are examined as relating to the issues of militarisation and rhizomatic qualities offers a historical context of the concepts that are raised within this thesis.

I. Kowloon Walled City (九龍城寨)

Kowloon Walled City was borne out of proper Chinese principles of prosperity and harmony, but the scars left from the Japanese occupation refused the city that was already neglected and ailing in its disorder. The lack of jurisdiction opened up its gates to not only the more derelict facets of society, but also to legitimate businesses which couldn't afford the licenses and confines of the outside.

The multiplicity and uncontrolled development is something particular and significant to Hong Kong, and similar densities by its distribution of essential social and business functions. As well as exempting from previous typologies of urban living, apropos transit routes and threshold conditions are investigated.

These are the current circumstances of the urban environment. Conditions of high-rise structures does not equate only to stacked use, but the freedom of vertical inhabitation in as many methods as possible.

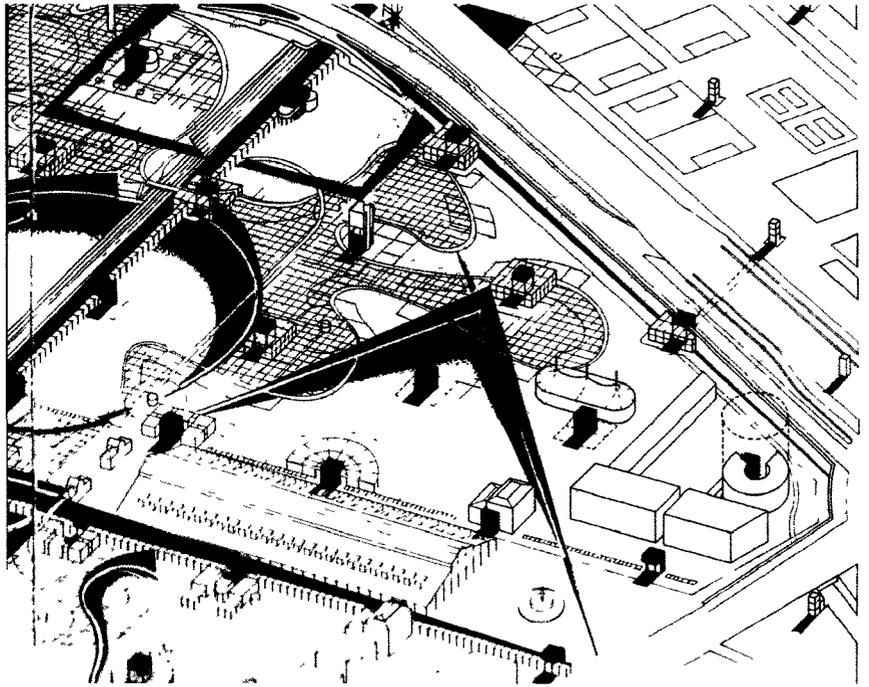


Fig. 48

II. Parc de la Villette

Parc de la Villette is examined not for its design methodology, but the principles in which Bernard Tschumi employs for this project. Conceived as a formal embodiment of his theoretical ideas, the understanding of unbalancing expectations is significant.

The folies, the red structures which dot the park along a grid, are intended to be transformed according to specific programmatic needs. Though designed with a definitive, yet differentiating forms, the unusual spaces initially alienated and disarmed users.

The impression given elaborates the relationship between user and space, where the user is not always a volunteer of any such space inhabited. If the user, therefore, is not a volunteer or dictator of that space, then one becomes the fugitive of the architecture.

If the fugitive, while belonging to a program or space, does not comply with the dictated intentions of it, then it is up to him to de-territorialise its given meaning.

SITE

Flight path towards Runway 13

Checkboard approach denoting a 47° turn

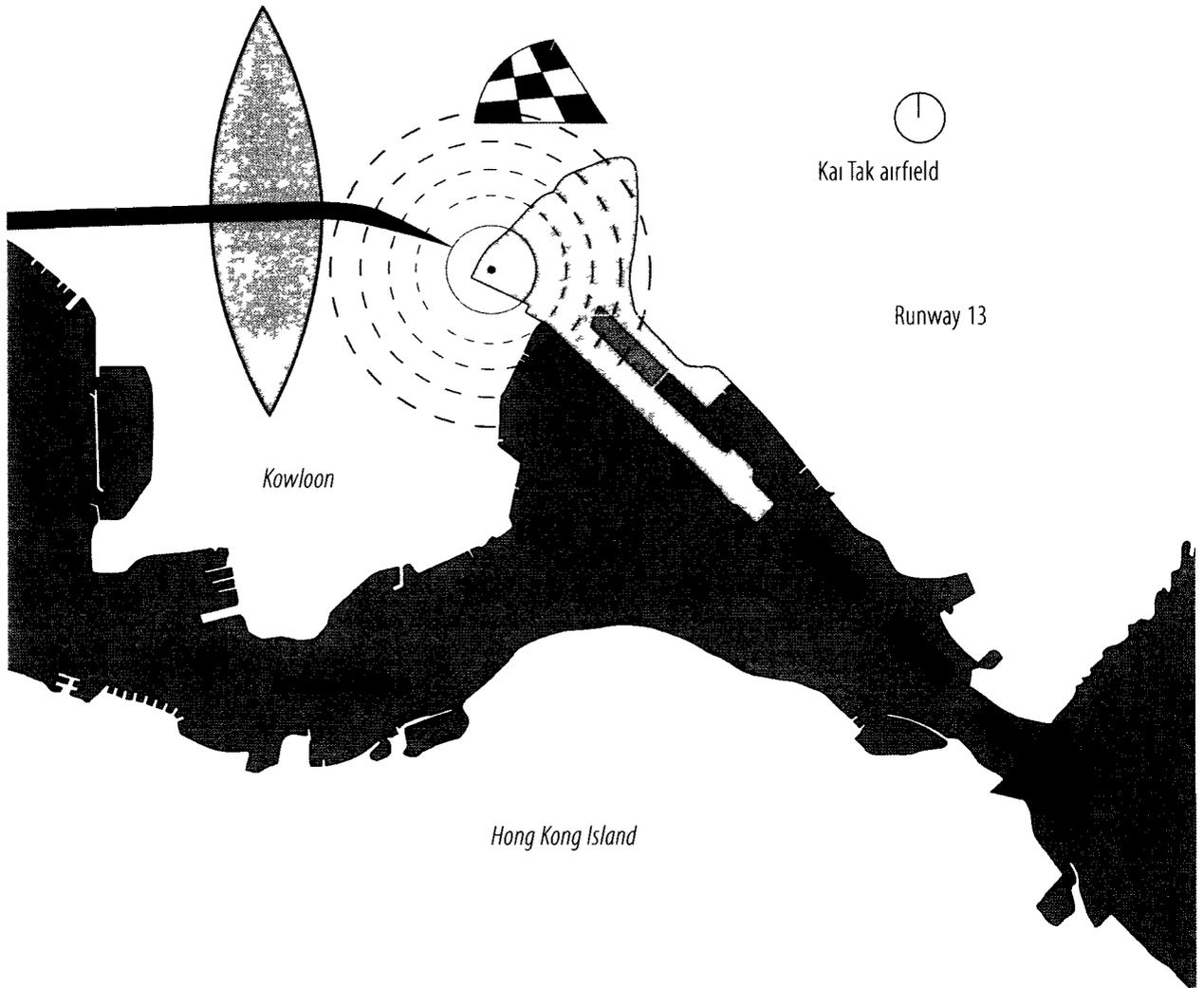
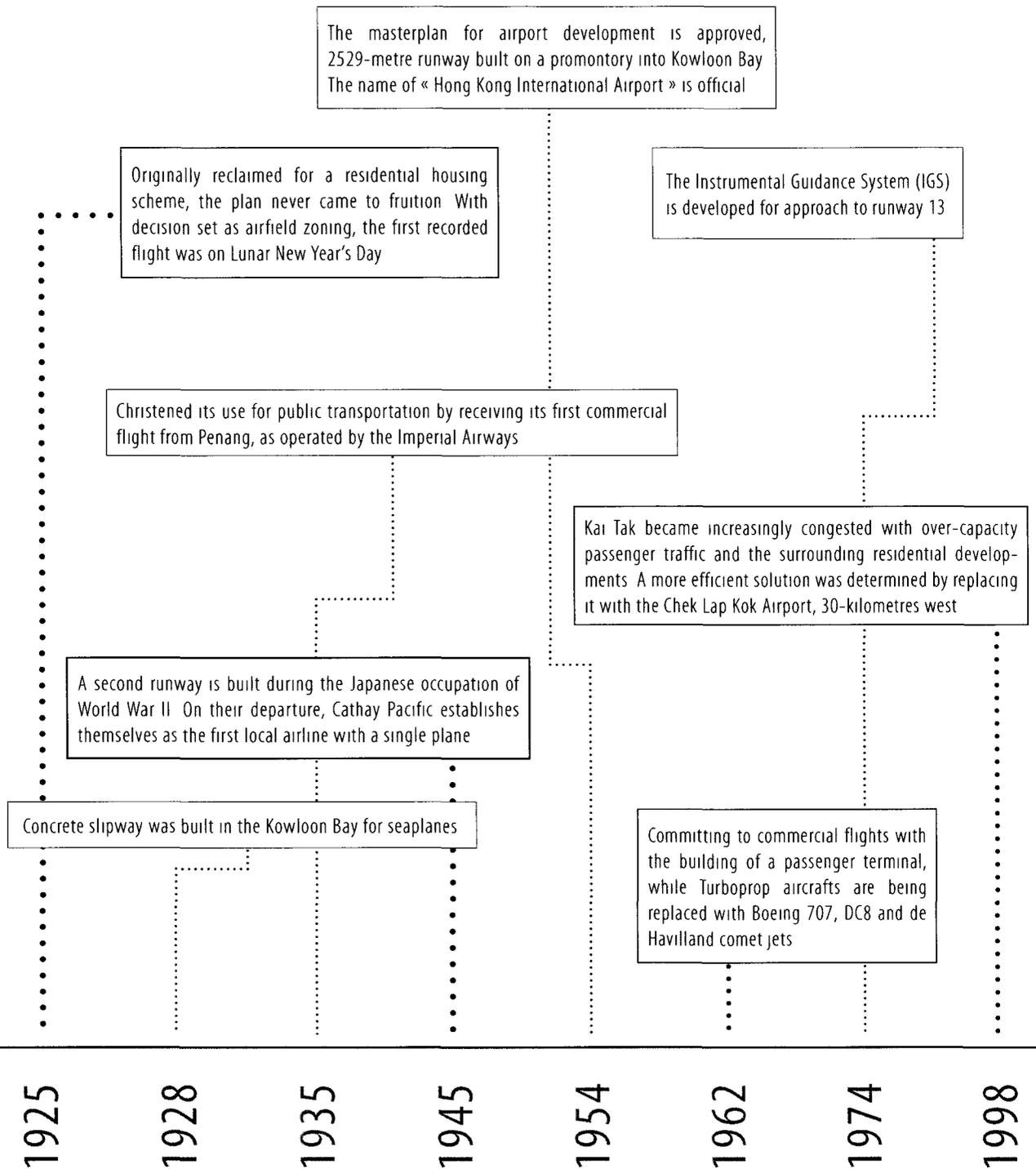


Fig 49

SITE: HISTORY



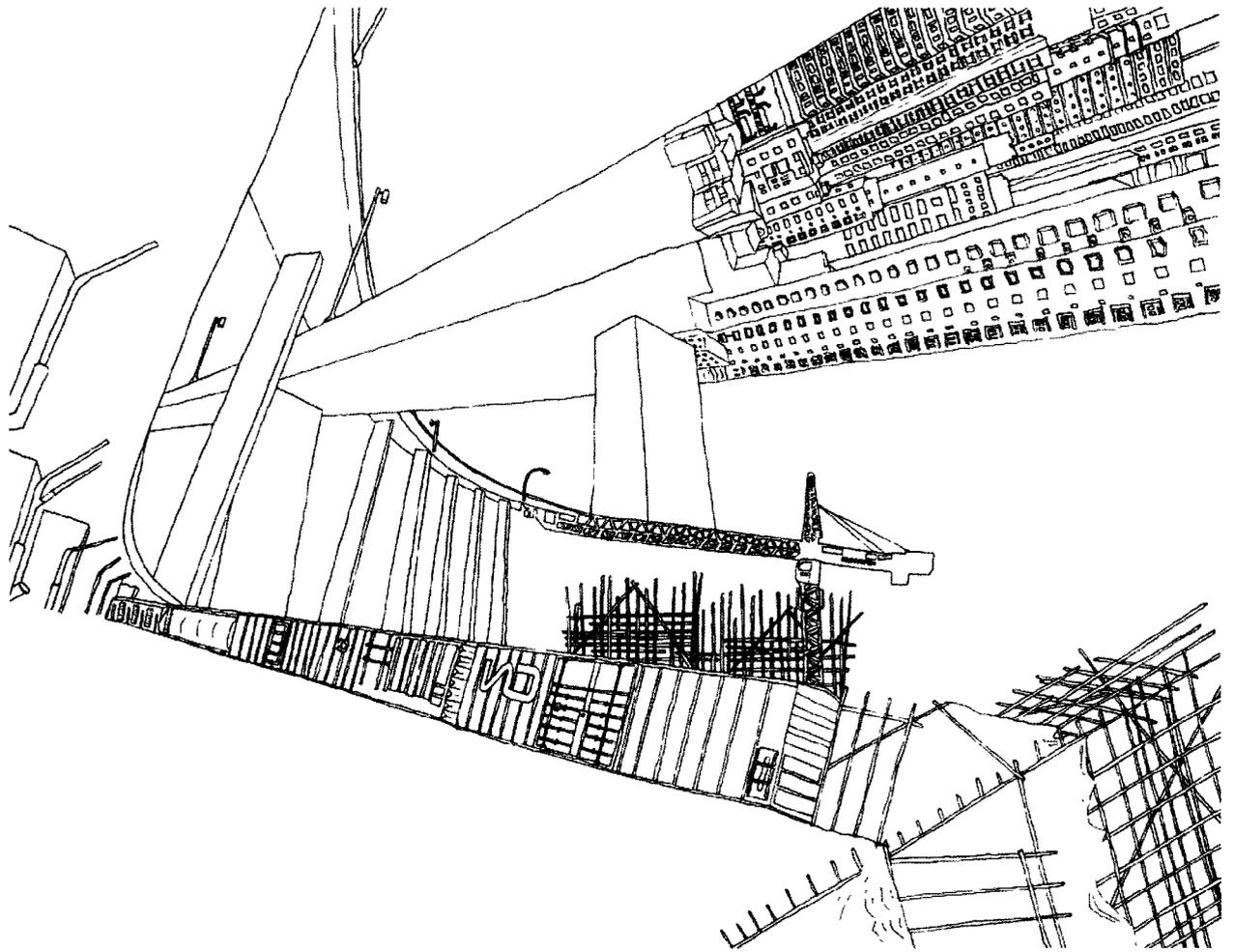


Fig. 50

IN PURSUIT OF THE RHIZOME

The notion of the threshold is the relationship of the self to a further projection, the embodied potential of which is an activation of being. If the threshold is most commonly understood as the parting of separate conditions, then this threshold is instead the question of that parting magnified, as if by photocopy, where a fine line becomes a crowd of dots with spaces between which become the space for *event*, moment and change. In this context space does not have definitive edges but an infinite border which contains the projection as a peripatetic vertex.

The research surrounding this threshold references phenomenology not in the usual architectural application but as a philosophy within its historical context, and *projection of the self* per making is equivalent to *architectural project*. The *Ghost Airport* is a bridge for fugitives on the site of the former Kai Tak air strip, extending around the world like tentacles to cut a section through the cultural and demographic divides that represent the impoverished or subjugated masses.

Built in the persistent conditions of the abandoned airfield in Hong Kong, the form of the *Ghost Airport* follows the defunct flight path of runway 13, which arrives from the west to the centre of the city. High-rise luxury apartments are now directly obstructing the flight path, and so acts as a structural crutch to carry the form over the adjacent express-way.

The significance of the rhizome touches upon two faces: one, varying histories occurring at different times and different places cooperating on a level at which the *Ghost Airport* can agree upon, and two, the (codified) language that is discovered, explored and developed within the process of this project.

Because projects are built on a tailored language, it is helpful to one's understanding of a project to understand the language used in creating it, which itself shifts vocabulary over time to take steps and overcome obstacles in the design of analogous forms and spaces, and is thereby ultimately pivotal to understanding the finished product as it fits into a contextual and programmatic narrative. This language bridges a gap between the theory and the practise of putting something somewhere, so that people know how to engage it at the highest level of possibility.

The title « In Pursuit of the Rhizome », therefore, expresses the structure of consciousness which inflects upon the process and meaning of architecture. The grasping of phenomena which makes the experience identifiable allows a project unique to the *doubling of the self* that encompasses the historical, social and cultural contexts, and of understanding the liminality of the airport and the wavering identity of the self.

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