

# Keeping Up with Technologies to Improve Places



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Edited by

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## PREFACE

*Keeping up with technologies to improve places* is a book of the selected best papers presented at the 1st International Academic Conference on Places and Technologies, held at the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Architecture on 3rd and 4th April 2014. The conference was organized by three partner organisations; University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture, Professional Association Urban Laboratory and University of Belgrade - Faculty of Philosophy, with the aim of bringing together leading researchers, professors and PhD students, as well as practitioners, in order to create a platform for sharing knowledge and know how in the fields of growth, new technologies and environment. The stated goals point to the necessity of a multidisciplinary approach, identifying relationships between technological development, environmental protection and social change. Consequently, the conference program and speakers were to focus on the knowledge of several academic disciplines: engineering and technical sciences, humanities and social sciences. The main tasks of the conference are defined as follows; discussion on the current issues related to the future of society and places, design of places, facilities and infrastructure in line with new and future needs of inhabitants, development of institutions and regulations with the aim of creating an appropriate and high quality environment, and the creation of favourable conditions for the advancement of innovation and business.

As we have received a variety of very interesting and innovative research papers as made by young scientists and their mentors from all over Europe, we are proud to share them all in one place, something which was made possible by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, who recognized the importance of the subject and the value of the papers, in deciding to publish this book. In accordance with the main goal and tasks, the book includes 25 papers structured into three main parts. The first part, *Urbanism and Technologies*, covers the topics of a) urban planning and technologies, b) big data, apps, social networks and micro blogs in urban planning and design, c) urban design and technologies and d) historical centres, building heritage and technologies. The second part, *Architecture and Technologies*, includes papers in the fields of a) sustainability, sustainable buildings and technologies, b) green strategies and technologies,



c) innovative materials, systems and technologies and d) cultural patterns, architecture and technologies. The third part, *Places, technologies and Related fields*, deals with the issues of a) geodesy and modern cartography and b) mobility and technologies.

As the editors of this book, we want to express our appreciation to all the authors and our partners from Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their kind invitation, cooperation and help in preparation of the book.

Editors

Belgrade,

25th December 2014



# **BETWEEN THE PLACE AND NON- PLACE: ARCHITECTURE AND TERRITORY ON THE EXAMPLE OF SKOPJE**

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## ABSTRACT

*It was told that the place is disappearing in the modern contexts. Crisis of modern architecture first started with the crisis of specific places and the essential relation between the architectural object, technology and its place. But **has** contemporary architecture find the real place, or even became more disconnected to the specific places? **Has** the contemporary conflict situation uncovered more dramatic relation between the architecture, technology and places? Evident crisis of the places in the modern era is only anticipation of the permanent state of conflict in the contemporary society. Cretan theories already define the relation of historical places and supermodern non-places as well as unique place and its reproduction. But the main aim is how to deal with dynamic status of place in contemporary situations beyond the proposed binary relation of place and non-place and the original and the copy. On the example of the city of Skopje which went through dramatic transformation during the process of modernization is possible to examine some aspect of contemporary places seen through the issue of everyday places. Through selected project we will examine possible approach to places and technologies, which goes beyond the dialectic of place, no-place towards the notion of the territory as principal medium of architectural modification.*

*Keywords: place, non-place, everyday place, territory*

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# Chapter 1: Introduction: Place and Non-place

The contemporary crisis of the place is a result of a fundamental change in the positioning of the architectural object and its location. Number of authors examined the correlation of architecture and context in the modern world from different points of view, as life process and physical structure, geometrical space and anthropological space as a utopia and heterotopia, as unique place and its reproduction. In 1990's Marc Augé wrote about the changed perception of the place in the time of super modernity, while Walter Benjamin in 1930's wrote about the change in the relationship between the object and its place in the period of the mechanical reproduction<sup>2</sup>. Marc Augé made a distinction between anthropological spaces and modern places, between place and non- place. They set the opposing poles of the super-modernism of today. But this type of approach opens up a range of issues in architecture.

According to Mark Augé, place has at least three common characteristics, place of identity, relations and history<sup>3</sup>. One place is a constituent of individual identity. One place of any kind is characterized by containing an order under which the elements are distributed in relation to coexistence. One place is historical in the sense that history is part of the collective and individual practice.

Opposite the spatial constructs that were labeled as places are non-places.

"If a place can be defined as relational, historical and connected with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as a relation, or historical, or connected with identity will be a non-place<sup>4</sup>.

Hypothesis that Mark Augé sets says that super-modernism produces non-places, meaning spaces which themselves are not anthropological

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Umetnicko djelo u razdoblju tehnicke reprodukcije*, trans. Snješka Knežević, (Zagreb: Esteticki ogleđi, Skolska knjiga 1986).

<sup>3</sup> Marc Augé, *Non-Places, Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London-New York: Verso, 1995), 52 .

<sup>4</sup> Augé, *Non-Places, Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, 77-78.

## CHAPTER ONE

places and failing to integrate former places. If paradigm places are closed pre-modern ethnic cultures, indigenous societies, local technologies, precisely located in space and time, then non-places are an expression of individual personality, applicability, temporality, global technology and production, ephemera of transit points in that proliferate "luxury and inhumane" conditions, world anonymous, airports, hotels, supermarkets, informal configurations.

Recognizing the contradiction of place and non- place Mark Augé indicates their ambivalent relationship, that neither of them exist in pure form. That such ambivalence is the basis of this article, which is aimed at exploring the area between also positioning of the place in according to the technology that produces and reproduces it, which is certainly recognized but not sufficiently explored and explained. The purpose of this research is to position an everyday place as resistant level of contemporary practice and different applied technologies, contrary to the imposed binary discourse of the place. The assumption is that in today's marginalized everyday places, it's possible to have a reconstruction and recycling of a sequence of inclusive tactics and technologies as a complex and eclectic system of ratios subsequently differentiated layers of the reference site.



## Chapter 2: Dual Places

In the thirties of the twentieth century, Salvador Dali got a postcard that shows an African village. When he rotated this postcard in 90 °, in it he saw a phantom head, a Portrait of Picasso. That such association, to see something otherwise or from one state to pass to another, from one place to transform to another representation, or a prepositional starting to cause a series of associative array, presented was basically the paranoid - critical method Salvador Dali formulated in the thirties of the twentieth century. Challenging pictures with surprising and authentic nature by transcending validity of reality<sup>5</sup>. This method was a result of the technique of reproduction of one authentic place in multitude of copies and in a surprising way introduced us to the world of continuous flux of authentic associations of unique images, in which from one picture another emerges, from one state another is created.



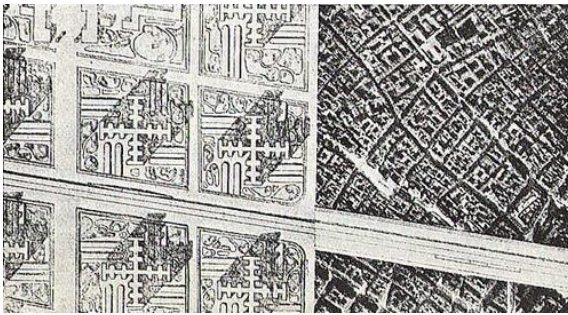
**Fig 2-1: Dual Image, two positions of the postcard of African village, which in the early 1930s was received from Salvador Dali by Pablo Picasso. The opportunity to see two things in one picture, a village and a person, served to Salvador Dali in order to illustrate the concept of the paranoid-critical method<sup>6</sup>.**

<sup>5</sup> Salvador Dali, *The Conquest of the Irrational* (1936), accessed August 2013, [http://feastofhateandfear.com/archives/salvador\\_2.html](http://feastofhateandfear.com/archives/salvador_2.html).

<sup>6</sup> “Sunday Dali: Paranoiac Visage, 1931”. Timothy Rosenberg, *One Surrealist a Day Blog*, accessed February 16, 2012. <http://onesurrealistaday.com/post/480421998/paranoiac-visage>.

## CHAPTER TWO

In a similar way we can follow progressive visions of modernity. Le Corbusier book "The City of Tomorrow", gave an evocative vision of the new city, as a juxtaposition of a setting of one spatial order and the context of existing capital<sup>7</sup>. In the plan "Voisin" 1925, in one frame two pictures are shown, the District that should be demolished and what is suggested to be built in its place. In a dramatic way it presents a juxtaposition of simultaneous presence of imaginary versus existing. Actually both pictures show this is an extreme scenario for the same place, which can be seen in two ways, and refer to two opposite realities, one that is historically rooted in place and another that transcends the historical model of the site and proposes a new spatial structure for the city of tomorrow. Both pictures are supported by two different technological paradigms: Traditional paradigm that develops the architecture in a chain of time sequences, and Modern paradigm, where architecture is based on instant version of serial production of one element. The possibility of appearance of one place multiple times in vertical placements, as skyscrapers of the 1960's the new architectural typologies suggested by Le Corbusier, problematized the authenticity of one place in a dramatic way.



**Fig 2-2:** “Here is the solution proposed by the “Voisin” Scheme. Here are the districts which it is proposed to demolish and those which it is suggested should be built in their place. Both plans are to the same scale.” (Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow* (London: The Architectural Press, 1971), 289).

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<sup>7</sup> Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow* (London: The Architectural Press, 1971), 276-289.

## DUAL PLACES

In this way modernity has questioned the historical relationship of architecture and the place; in spatial plan through revitalization of specific spatial situations and the place, in technological plan through aligning of the methods of building and technology over particular places. However the real result of the project of modernity not only repeal of the existing "backwardness" of the physical structure and a set of opposites spatial new lines, the net result is exactly the fragmentation of existing spatial situations and the simultaneous presence of different fragments, different spatial models and technologies of building as possible configurations of one place. In this way the fragmentation of our cities cannot be understood as a result of the exterior of the modern project outcome, but as a result of the essential reconceptualisation of the place through the relationship of the architectural object and the technology that produces it.

## Chapter 3: Everyday Places - Recycling Technologies

On the example of the city of Skopje which went through dramatic transformation during the process of modernization, it's possible to examine some aspect of contemporary places seen through the issue of territory. Through selected projects, we will examine possible approaches to places and technology, which goes beyond the dialectic of place, no-place, towards the notion of the territory as principal medium of architectural modification.

What do we see today in the city? Today's city is all but not a continuous physical artifact. View of Skopje (2x2km) shows heterogeneity, divergent texture. Almost tactile we can feel the difference. What is behind this inhomogeneous picture? The answer to this question was the real reason for the research of the city morphology, through a series of analytical drawings. In this manner within one frame, we have decomposed array of thematic layers.

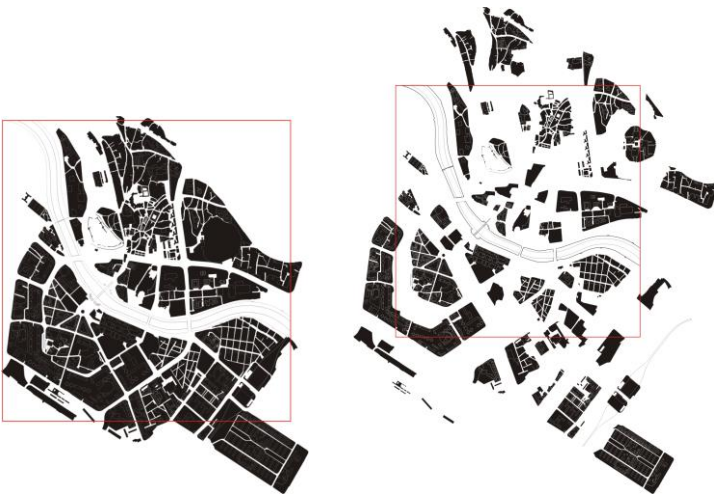


Fig 3-1: Skopje, city of fragments /collection of different pieces

This way the city in the given frame, exploded in a city of fragments, as a product of a series of reflections, a series of exclusive lines that once had to be established and form and reform the city, and as a result produced incoherent picture of its texture <sup>8</sup>. As a city made up of cities, a city of possible worlds.



**Fig 3-2: Novo Maalo neighborhood, on the poster Architecture of Everyday Life, 16 Biennale of Macedonian Architecture 2012; Badnik (Christmas Eve) fires in the Skopje neighborhood.**

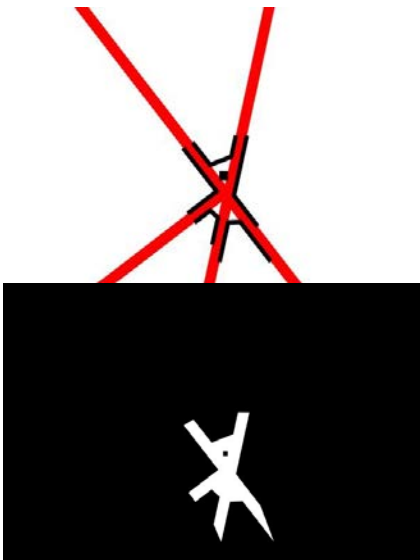
However, if the view from above shows the complexity and contradiction of the modern city, what is the view from below, view of an urban stroller, after his everyday places?

The poster of the Biennale of the Macedonian Architecture from 2012 titled "Architecture of Everyday Life," shows a picture of one of Skopje neighborhoods. Specifically it is a picture of Novo Maalo neighborhood, one of the pieces of the city, which consumes itself almost, dissipates before our eyes. What's in this image? Ensemble of the once active houses, the remains of one nostalgic past, but what truly possesses a deep human scale, humanity, regardless of the complexity, bizarre, pretense, the poverty in appearances. Although the neighborhood reads devastating processes of the lengthy transition process of the urban fragments of the city, it still has a spatial and social capacity; it has the specific quality and atmosphere of an authentic place - historical, relational and identifiable. At Christmas Eve in different neighborhoods, bonfires are lit, and residents are gathering around them. One tradition, which although is increasingly

<sup>8</sup> Minas Bakalchev, "Housing as an Urban Fragment on the Case of Skopje" (PhD diss., University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Architecture, Skopje, 2004).

## CHAPTER THREE

subject to criticism, shows the authentic desire of the residents of belonging and connecting to the place. In Novo Maalo, Christmas Eve is celebrated at a specific place, section of five streets, whose central axial is touching upon the modest neighborhood tap, while leaving "contemplative" spatial pockets. This place genuinely holds authentic value, on one hand common everyday and at other archetypal, timeless value. Passing through it, it feels like a great space star appears under our feet with the power to organize and at the same time transcends our daily spatial experience.



**Fig 3-3: "Star": section of streets in Novo Maalo**

This neighborhood Novo Maalo, was the subject of research of integrative studio of architecture by University St. Cyril and Methodius. Originally project of the architectural studio, "Tactics of transforming residential texture : a new collective form of Novo Maalo" followed by individual master works , aimed at exploring ways to transform an urban fragment, residential gap, deriving both from everyday hypothetical situations and visions of utopian energy of the seventies through the concept of collective form by Fumihiko Maki.



**Fig 3-4: Models of integrative studio Tactics of transformation of the housing texture, a new collective form In Novo neighborhood, Skopje, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius ", 2013**

In the project we started from an inversion of the spatial neighborhood system, kind of an anti-neighborhood. What if the void of the streets become solid? What if the solid texture starts to become void? Series of projects have given different alternations on this inverse reading of the neighborhood. Rise of the streets, layering of the streets, upgrading of the streets, sequential connecting of selected land plots and their extruding, cutting of the city as a method for interaction of the urban fragments. All these projects were supported by the technological models developed in the modern times, standard structural systems based on repetitive modules, use of the infrastructure structural models, now placed in closer local situations and contexts. This way technological model are free from their ideological base of order of hierarchy, from above to downward, faced with the local context with a new and productive intensity.



**Fig 3-5: Aleksandar Petanovski: linear configuration as incision, cutting the city (MA Project), University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius", 2013**

## CHAPTER THREE

All of them proved to be the dialog between the historical place and the new place, a kind of double dynamic place, new structure layered on an existing one, but not as excluding, but as including, upgrading and assimilation. Tactics that using and recycling existing technologies brought back the dialogue with the place. The same tactics that brings us back to the primordial character of one place as a territory in which different configurations are only inclusive episodes from which exciting new spatial constructs can become.



## Conclusion

To go back to Salvador Dali, who in the thirties of the twentieth century formulated the method of the paranoid-critical activity, in part it was based on challenging images with surprising and authentic nature by transcending validity of reality. This method leads to a world of continuous flux of the associations, from one picture another emerges, from one state another is created. Similarly looking at the city today inspires a new critical interpretation of reality. Salvador Dali trans - edited the technological base of reproduction of one copy in which the authenticity of the original is lost, perceiving it another way, not as an end product but as a beginning of new associative images. That relation of serial production we could accept as a view point toward modern and contemporary technologies, but not as exclusive systems but as inclusive frames of intense dialogue with the particular places.

Just by avoiding the binary ratio of place / non-place and searching for real relations it's possible to recognize contemporary everyday places. Modern architecture has differentiated the place on the basis of certain criteria and split its appearance, before and after; super-modernism swept across space and excluded the gaps of authentic places. Based on today's example of marginal everyday places we can recognize the potential of direct ratio to the site as open territory and inclusive technology. The visions in which the figures of the past can remain, but from which we are liberated, may free the authenticity of today.

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