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Issues

Dominique Peck 2018

COLUMN A

Tamotsu Ito ventured to problematize the assemblage of living, living space and living room in his project office. He combined aspect of transformative organizing with architectural ethnography to create an amalgam practice that comprises different methods, tools, theories and discourses.

The competition's procedure management described such problematization with regards to the Begegnungshaus as a requirement for all architects in charge of the project office in the tender document. The analysis of the current situation was extended to include the concept of and subject to living or accommodation. On the first day of the planning competition, a guided tour through the project Accommodation with Perspective Living provided a good overview over the built environment of the accommodation on site.

ABOUT COLUMN A

What's the point? How do we do it? These are simple questions that need to be explored in the beginning or project genesis phase or structuring phase more than answered. This page outlines some aspects of the theoretical-conceptual basis of this exploration.

In Jesko Fezer's (2007) essay Planungsmethodik gestern (Planning Methodology Yesterday) one can read between the lines that actor network theory, as an anti-reductionist heuristic in urban design, is not something completely new, but rather focuses on the familiar: How actors come together and decide what is of value. Lucius Burckhardt's (1970) text Politische Entscheidungen in der Bauplanung (Political Decisions in Building Planning) opened up the discussion about building, the decisions and preliminary decisions necessary for it among heterogeneous constellations of actors. Burckhardt describes how issues - any topics that are discussed in public - are produced to appear as constraints and how these constraints contribute to the rapid "solution" of such issues.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VO97jLc7LPU>

Armyros, Takis, Fritz Witschi, H.U. Leuenberger, Beat Marten und andere.

1970. Eine Stadt sucht ihre Mörder oder Wie Profitgier eine Stadt zerstört. Die

wissenschaftliche und politische Orientierung für das Referendum und den Film fußen auf Arbeiten und Ideen von Lucius Burckhardt)

“The simplest factual constraint is a dilapidated building or infrastructure (Übelstand). A primitive, but frequently used means, for example, is to let the old cafeteria or indoor swimming pool building deteriorate to such an extent that a new building has to be erected. ... Those who can create factual constraints free themselves from the constraints of political pressure and thus guide urban building policy.” (Burckhardt 1970, 48)

A revealing debate on Lucius Burckhardt's 1974 book "Wer plant die Planung" can be found in volume 5 of sub\urban. Burckhardt observed how this game works through observing his own work as a professor at the university among colleagues and students and as a representative on numerous advisory boards and juries. In the 1970s, Burckhardt was pleased with the use of computer-aided analytical methods but saw the possibility that decision-makers were being manipulated by planning experts. Above all, imaging methods such as traffic flow simulations in road planning or thermal imaging cameras in insulation measures as well as demographic practices such as social monitoring have led to considerable transformations of the structural environment and activated large sums of public money in recent years. Burckhardt by then had recognized that findings of research into the planning's procedural character and the mutual dependence of planner and decision-maker provided the means to probe deeper into decision-makers. This led him to understand the analysis of decision-makers as moving dangerously close to manipulation strategies (Burckhardt 1970). Thus, planning robs itself of the immensely important feedback loop of political disputes. The work of the Swiss national economist Burckhardt and several other positions in Fezer's essay – represented by Horst Rittel, Robert Goodmann, Yona Friedman - support project managers in the operationalization of emancipatory motives in urban and project development. “The actor network theory, if you will, is precisely the science that produces knowledge about planning that is adequate for planning, since it does not locate planning knowledge in the planner's head” (Guggenheim 2017, 149).

"We are not concerned here with mental or political places, nor with philosophical topoi, but with places of purely political kind" (Lefévre 1991).

Adele Clarke suggests a related approach – Situational Analysis – that has much to offer from the perspective of project management in urban design. Clarke (2012) compares situational analysis with analyses of political arenas - places and fields where politics takes place. It assumes the existence of several collective actors in social worlds involved in all sorts of negotiations and

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conflicts over events within a comprehensive substantial arena (Clarke 2012, 77). These occasions have a sufficient degree of importance and urgency for all social worlds and actors involved to provoke action and production of discourses on the concerns (or issues) of the arena (ibid.). In this broader situation there are also individuals, a whole range of non-human and hybrid actors, narratives, visual and historical discourses on related issues and so on (ibid.). Clarke's social discourse model relies heavily on Mead's key concepts of *perspective* and *commitment*. All actors have their own perspectives and obligations vis-à-vis the situation, which are articulated through discourses. Furthermore, since perspectives and obligations differ, arenas are usually the scene of disputes and controversies, which are particularly well suited for analyzing heterogeneous perspectives or positions on central elements, as well as for observing "power in action". By placing work or action in the foreground of the analysis, the illumination of human and non-human elements is facilitated (Clarke 2012, 91f). Michel Foucault was interested in the factual scarcity of individual existing statements and series of statements. He was concerned with the question of why one statement appeared at a certain time (and in a certain place) and not another in its place. Adele Clarke built on this Foucauldian interest and sought to combine it with the Grounded Theory approach as developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in an attempt to understand how discursive arenas are formed.

"Social relations, as concrete abstraction, only gain real existence in and for space. Their support is material." (Hiernaux-Nicolas 2014, 15)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umhwOLCLIME>

Clarke, Adele and Rachel Washburn. 2014. advertising their edited volume
Situational Analysis in Practice

Situation analysis is an extension of Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory is an empirical approach to qualitative social research that offers specific concepts for data analysis. Influenced by the sociology of the Chicago School, symbolic interactionism and philosophical pragmatism, it was originally developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss in the late 1960s. Empirical data - e.g. from interviews or observations - are openly coded, headings and memos are added in order to form analytically demanding categories, which are integrated into a theoretical analysis of the object of research if they are sufficiently saturated. The process of coding and analyzing begins with the first data, no matter how preliminary it may be. From the synopsis of the empirical data and knowledge from earlier discussions on the topic, possibilities for further data are developed.

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One of the most important research practices that situation analysis has taken from Grounded Theory is theoretical sampling: the heuristic value of an iterative research design and explorative strategies for data analysis, which by far exceeds a system for collecting and analyzing data (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont 2003, 162-163).

This research style is used in all Urban Design Projects. It is a very catchy and creative way to process heterogeneous data in an interdisciplinary setting. Usually, project members bring their data in the form of artwork (drawings, photos, diagrams) and texts on standard A4 office paper and stick them to a wall in an always provisional arrangement. This is then used as the basis for the work until the works have to be put into another format (for example a report, a design, a plan) or used in some other way.

Adele E. Clarke states that Grounded Theory is pushed through the postmodern turn by the outmoded application of some anachronistic principles - for example a positivist reference system or the researcher as a *tabula rasa*. One of the central steps here is the decentring of the “knowing subject” in the direction of existing narrative, visual and historical discourses (cf. Clarke 2012, 271). Due to the inclusion of non-human elements in actor network theory (ANT), I will look at the decentring of the subject in the version of ANT.

The generalized symmetry thesis of ANT tries not to determine who or what is subject and object of the observed process before the investigation (Callon 1986; Labour 1987a, 2002a). Callon and Latour adopt the concept of the actant of Algirdas Julien Greimas:

“Whatever acts or shifts actions, whereby actions themselves are defined as a series of performances against challenges and trials. From these performances a series of competences is derived with which the actant is equipped; [...] an actor is an actant who is equipped with a character (usually anthropomorphic).” (Akrich/Latour 2006, 399-400)

An actant is the one who takes on a role in history. “Every artifact has its script and the potential to stop and force a passer-by to play a role in its history” (Latour 2002, 215). Even if actants have no intention or humanity, as hybrids they create heterogeneous networks. They do mediation work. A human and a non-human agent form a hybrid in mediation. It is not the weapon that turns man into a murderer, nor is it only man that turns the weapon into an instrument of killing. It is the hybrid or actant “weapon citizen” or “citizen weapon” (Latour 2006b, 484-491). Actions are composed and divided. Action is the capacity of an entire ensemble of actants - it is mediation (ibid., 490). Actors

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are actants who enter into associations with one another, so that “acting” is the ability that arises from the connection of the actants in the network: “Action is a property of connections, of associated entities” (Latour 2002, 221). Through this version of action, the process of action comes to the fore; in a sense, action takes place through a chain of transformation. Action is distributed among various heterogeneous materialities. Only the reference or being set in relation makes an entity, a subject like an object.

The redefinition of the human and the artificial results in a different understanding of science. Science no longer takes subjects or objects as objects, but relationships, positions and fields of force:

"the exploration of a human being [is] synonymous with a field of forces and the exchange of documents, instruments, ideographies through a collective of equally distributed details [...] some of which look anthropomorphous, but many of which do not." (Latour 2006c, 537)

For project management in urban design, the most important extension of situational analysis through Grounded Theory and ANT is probably the mapping of positions and relations of actors. Thus, the relational frame of reference of the situational analysis comes to the fore. The principle of heterogeneity becomes apparent in the mapping. This is common to some new niches of architecture, urban design and/or urban planning practice. “The actor network theory, if you will, is precisely the science that produces knowledge about planning that is adequate for planning, since it does not locate planning knowledge in the planner's head” (Guggenheim 2017, 149).

“The result of such a continuous definition and redefinition of what collective action is about is to transform society from something existing and principally recognizable into something, so to speak, similarly constructed by each actor, which is recognizable in principle - it involves the change from an ostensive to a performative definition.” (Latour 2006b, 209).

„For us the diagram is not only a device that triggers architecture, or enables us to trigger architecture. It is also a device with which to look at the world and to try to represent some of the bizarre conditions we observe. For me this remains an important part of what we might call the diagram today.“ (Eisenman, Steele & Koolhaas 2010, 14)

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