DRAWING THE CITY

MOTIVES AND METHODS

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ABSTRACT

In '*Drawing the City: Motives and Methods'* I develop a dialectic relationship between the motives behind architectural drawings and the methods used for expressing these motives. An ideological motive, which is often present in urban planning, stems from a theoretical and psychological distance to the existing city. This results in the totalitarian character of architectural drawings, presenting an ideal city as a replacement for the existing city. However, unifying space is simultaneously necessary and problematic, because it tries to define the city's system but at the same time simplifies this system. To visualise a city which needs diversity rather than simplicity, the urban planner needs to use a different language, borrowed from artistic practice, cartography and linguistics. Through such a symbolic representation, urban planning can develop into a continuing production of space rather than an ideal city planned on an empty white plane.

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INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the 21st century saw many exhibitions focusing exclusively on architectural drawings; *Perfect Acts of Architecture* (2001)*, The changing of the avant-garde: visionary architectural drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection* (2002), *Fantasy Architecture: 1500-2036* (2004)*, Future City: Experiment and Utopia in Architecture* (2006). Most of these works are from the last 50 years of architectural practice, but instead of their conventional use as plans for construction, they have received the status of art in collections of prominent museums like MOMA. Jeffrey Kipnis, curator of '*Perfect Acts of Architecture',* understands such architectural drawings as "an end in itself, as a fully realized, self-sufficient work of architecture"[1]. The reason I am concerned with architectural drawings of cities which have never passed the paper stage, is because they are essentially plans for cities and therefore not always as independent as Kipnis says. The word 'plan' has a dual significance, meaning both a detailed drawing to scale of a building and a method for doing or achieving something. It illustrates that these drawings have an aesthetic quality, but are fundamentally located in an ideological practice. They reveal how architects and artists[2] understand, imagine and realise the city. An investigation into the visual language of drawings - in particular drawings which serve as utopias, experimentation or research - therefore needs to look first at the motives for conceiving the ideal city and what socio-political role the architect and the artist have in this production of the urban environment. This is directly related to the development of new ideas on how the city is produced. Philosophers and urbanists in the 1960s and 70s criticised modernist architecture, in particular the utopian plans of Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and Ebenezer Howard. They argued that the city works best through diversity and disorder, and is produced by the

[1] KIPNIS, Jeffrey, 2001. *Perfect Acts of Architecture*, p. 12.
[2] The terms 'architect' and 'artist', as well as 'urban planner', will be used flexibly throughout this essay. I don't intend to make a strong division between these practices, because in most cases the individuals saw themselves as embodying both, if not all three roles. Therefore, my aim will be to see how one practice can inform the other in developing a stronger relationship between motives and methods.

many relationships rather than purely the architecture. I will focus here on the ideas of Henri Lefebvre from his books '*The Production of Space'* (first ed. 1974) and '*Writings on Cities'*, in which he attempts to explain that space is produced and that the city is therefore an 'oeuvre' - a spatial and social product of human relationships[3]. In this search for a unitary theory of space he tries to accommodate theory *and* practice, and merge the mental with the social, as well as philosophy with reality. Throughout the text I will also be referring to Richard Sennett's sociological explanation of the need for disorder in the city ('*The Uses of Disorder'*, first ed. 1970) and Jane Jacobs' justification of diversity in the city ('*The Death and Life of Great American Cities',* first ed. 1961). This should form the basis for answering the key question whether notions of disorder and diversity can be embodied in one unitary theory of space as Lefebvre and urban planners attempted to. This will also be the question for architectural drawings. Can the ideal visions of urban planners be reconciled with ideas of diversity through a different visual language?

THE MENTAL SPACE

The problematic role of the urban planner can be best explained through the utopian plans which were developed in the early twentieth century. The utopianists, especially Le Corbusier (fig.1 in Illustrations p. 24) and Frank Lloyd Wright, saw themselves foremost as artists who received "a special social function to perform"[4]. The need for this social function was evoked by the critical condition of the cities, affected and infected by the industrial revolution. A problematic that is understood through the orthodoxy of these plans is that they entailed more than just a reconstruction of the physical space; they implied a new social structure. Le Corbusier, Wright and Howard believed that changing the physical

[3] LEFEBVRE, Henri, 1996. *Writings on Cities*, p. 101.
[4] FISHMAN, Robert, 1982. *Urban Utopias of the Twentieth Century*, p. 108.

environment can revolutionise the total life of a society. Henri Lefebvre makes a distinction between the mental, the social and the physical space. He defines the mental space as a product of the scientific reduction applied to social space. In the process, mental space becomes ideological and purely theoretical. Lefebvre links it to the space of the technocrats, the urban planners, or in general "the egocentric thinking of specialized Western intellectuals"[5]. The utopianists worked within such a mental space, which made them believe that they were society's natural leader. The result was a strong desire to control society and plan its future through new cities. The mental space is therefore located in a deeper psychological attitude that the individual has in relationship to others.

Richard Sennett in '*The Uses of Disorder'* claims that an individual's desire to control his environment is a process of the purification of the self, in which one builds a fixed and coherent identity to filter out the threats of social experience: "the threat of being overwhelmed by difficult social interactions is dealt with by fixing a self-image in advance, by making oneself a fixed object rather than an open person liable to be touched by a social situation"[6]. This identity problem which occurs in adolescence brings further complications when it is brought into adult life. There are peculiar behaviour patterns noticeable in for example young doctors, revolutionaries and urban planners, which Sennett calls the 'little-god complex'. It is a defining of relationships between this individual and other people before an actual encounter has taken place. The same happens on a larger scale in the city, where a purification of communities takes place. This is a desire for communal sameness where none exists. At the same time it becomes a self-destructive force which denies curiosity and the human desire to explore, because groups of people isolate themselves from others. The result is a decrease in complex social forms which is intensified by the

[5] LEFEBVRE, Henri, 1991. *The Production of Space,* p. 24.
[6] SENNETT, Richard, 1992. *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life*, p. 6

simultaneous scientific and technological progress. Sennett concludes that society needs disorder, or even anarchy, to make life richer and the individual stronger in his acceptance of otherness.

This creation of a god-like identity is reflected in the utopian drawings in the use of the axonometric, especially by Le Corbusier. It is a drawing style that positions the architect's eye above his graphic creation as if in a flight over it[7]. This conceptual distance illustrates the schism between the architect's mental space of logic, maths and rationalism and the social space of everyday life in the city. The problem of the urban planners is that they are "forever promoting the basic sophistry whereby the philosophico-epistemological notion of space is fetishized and the mental realm comes to envelop the social and physical ones"[8]. In '*Urban Utopias of the Twentieth Century'* Robert Fishman says that the utopianists were aware that physical facilities could not solve social problems by themselves, and that urban, political and economic reconstruction had to merge. By recapturing the historical context of the utopian plans, Fishman tries to restore the unity of architectural form and social content of the ideal cities. Nevertheless, the drawings cannot capture this totality, because the social space is merely suggested through the physical space. The inhabitants of Le Corbusier's '*Radiant City'*, if included at all, are generalised and small black marks. The buildings are a homogeneous physical mass, with no distinction between shops, dwellings or offices. Although the drawings are representational and the physical space is self-explanatory, in fact they rely on a verbal explanation for a full understanding of the utopian vision. On the other hand, the drawings are very independent because "the setting of these ideal cities was never any actual location, but an empty, abstract plain where no contingencies existed"[9]. They

[7] PORTER, Tom, 1983. Between the Drawing-board and the Coffee-table, p.71.
[8] LEFEBVRE, Henri, 1991. *The Production of Space,* p. 5. Lefebvre talks here in particular about linguistics, but this comment can be applied in general to theoretical practices which produce a mental space.
[9] FISHMAN, Robert, 1982. *Urban Utopias of the Twentieth Century*, p. 6.

speak of an ideal space (relating to the mental logico-mathematical space) and are unrelated to the real space (the practico-sensory realm of social practice) as it existed in the early twentieth century. But above all, the planner was removed from all social opinion, believing that through his authority he can plan the ideal city and simultaneously the lives of its inhabitants.

IDEOLOGICAL URBAN PLANNING

Having argued that urban planners work within a mental space, the question arises what the key problems are of such an ideological urban planning. The utopian plans have in some cases only physically been realised, but never as the architects imagined them in their totality, because the necessary set of changes was too complex. The ideal city was too far removed from the existent architectural, social and political urban situation which resisted radical and totalitarian change. Much more paradoxical were the subsequent actions of the Lettrist International in the 1950s, which aimed at changing everyday life through radical actions rather than plans. Their anti-authoritarian views, for example claiming that "the situations in which we live are created for us"[10], materialized in an active exploration and re-experiencing of the urban environment. They promoted a nomadic lifestyle through which the individual can reinvent the city. They called their investigations into the specific effects which the geographical environment has on the emotions and behaviour of individuals 'psychogeography'. Through the 'dérive'– loosing oneself in the city through the act of unorganised walking – they mapped the effects which the environment has on its inhabitants. Simultaneously, they wanted to raise awareness of how everyday life is conditioned and controlled. This awareness was a crucial step towards an understanding that space is

[10] PLANT, Sadie, 1992. *Most radical gesture: the Situationist International in a postmodern age*, p. 57.

produced by everyone involved in it. It resulted in the idea of a Unitary Urbanism, a synthesis of not only architecture, art and technology, but also the whole atmosphere of space. Paradoxically, this unitary outcome was the same attitude as the utopianists held, even though the Situationists approached it from within the city – through a close and personal analysis of the urban environment. With the establishment of Situationist International in 1957, the critical exploration of the city turned into radical propositions for a new way of living. The associated artist Constant Nieuwenhuys (fig.2) answered with the city project '*New Babylon*': "no longer would architecture be the concrete manifestation of a controlling social order"[11]. This mobile city, or in fact one building, was completely flexible and modifiable according to the needs and wishes of its inhabitants. Catherine de Zegher described the city: "The inhabitants drift by foot through the huge labyrinthine interiors, perpetually reconstructing every aspect of the environment by changing the lighting and reconfiguring the mobile and temporary walls"[12]. It is noticeable that she compares it to a labyrinth, which is dynamic in this case but in essence understood as a structure which controls the movement of its inhabitants. It illustrates that even though the Situationists had a greater understanding of the relationship between the material city and the subjective experience of it, the solution was another form of totalitarian construction. Social life became architectural play. There is also a schism between Constant's revolutionary ideas and his artistic output in the fact that the Situationists rejected the traditional arts, but kept on creating architectural drawings. De Zegher comments that "the militant anti-art position, which fused with the imperative to dissolve the separation between art and life, gave rise in Constant's project and other situationist works to a new dialectics of the simultaneous

[11] FORD, Simon, 2005. *Situationist International: a user's guide*, p. 74.
[12] DRAWING CENTER, 1999-2000. *The Drawing Center's Drawing Papers*, nr 3, p. 4.

negation and realization of art"[13]. This was the case for artists as well as for architects, both practices becoming more and more undistinguishable from each other.

The invention of the city as a megastructure was pushed even further by the experimental urban projects of the group Archigram[14] from the 1960s and 70s: the Walking City, Inflatable City, Plug-In City, The Continuous Monument, Spatial City etc. The projects are in Lefebvre's words a play with "the possible impossible"[15], they were not aimed at realisation but were a critique shared with the SI of totalitarian planning from the preceding decades. Archigram said of their plans: "The drawing was never intended to be a window through which the world of tomorrow could be viewed but rather as a representation of a hypothetical physical environment made manifest simultaneously with its two-dimensional paper proxy"[16]. Archigram understood the city as a living organism, in which the inhabitants can self-determine their environment through an adaptable and flexible architecture. The drawings of Plug-In City (fig.3), for example, consist of a diagonally shaped lattice to improve flexibility and cross-over movement, instead of the fixed grid as used by Le Corbusier in his plans of Radiant City. Nevertheless, Archigram's experiments with social dynamics still rely on a superior architectural order. These megastructures are purely fixated on technological complexity rather than developing social interaction. In this vision of the city as machine, they repeat Le Corbusier's idea that a house is a machine to live in. Their revolutionary ideas reproduce the same problems which they opposed from the beginning. This essentially ideological practice is covered up by their manifestos of a flexible life style and their collages where figures, words and objects seem as important as the architecture (fig.4). Their manifestos forget to acknowledge that it is the inhabitant's movement rather

[13] DRAWING CENTER, 1999-2000. *The Drawing Center's Drawing Papers*, nr 3, p. 4.
[14] The group included among others architects Peter Cook, Ron Herron, Michael Webb.
[15] LEFEBVRE, Henri, 1996. *Writings on Cities*, p. 21.
[16] COOK, Peter, ed., 1999. *Archigram*, p. 2.

than the city's movement which makes the city dynamic, which was not only argued by the SI, but also by Jane Jacobs a few years earlier in her book '*The Death and Life of Great American Cities'* – to which I will return later. The conflicting images and texts show that Archigram doesn't achieve reconciliation of the mental and the social space, in a similar way that the Situationists didn't provide a real unitary solution. Although this seems to be a crucial problem in a revolutionary architectural practice, Archigram notes only briefly that "the dependence upon such things [machines] for an emancipatory life is one of our paradoxes"[17].

A critique of the megastructure was formed by the group Utopie with the effective claim that "in synthesizing, the urbanist thinks he is making the unity of the city legible, when in fact he is doing nothing but projecting his *own* representation of the city, inherited from the cultural and advertising ideology of contemporary society, onto the urban reality"[18]. A similar but more ironic critique was expressed by Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis in their project '*Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture'* (fig.5). Inspired by the Berlin Wall, the concept is that there is neither freedom on the east nor the west side, only inside the wall. The idea of voluntary prisoners who live in the wall comments on the use of architecture as a political instrument. The context and motive of an architectural project is all important, because it can reveal the authoritarian character or even the architect's hidden fantasy to control through architecture. The problematic of this work is that it can be understood either as a serious proposition in line with Archigram's works, or as a parody on the earlier megastructures. Only the use of satellite images of London as location for the megastructure emphasises the absurd character of the proposal. The same questioning of motives should be applied to the very seductive utopian plans. The reductionism which was

[17] COOK, Peter, ed., 1999. *Archigram*, p. 70.
[18] RILEY, Terence, et al., 2002. *The changing of the avant-garde: visionary architectural drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection*, p. 28.

applied to urban space appeals to the human desire to order the environment. However, the utopian systematic reduction was part of a political practice, and used as a tool for domination and control. The ideology of the reductive practice was - just like in science - concealed by the notion of an 'established knowledge', which justified its power. Yet, the problem is that such environmental simplification causes in fact a fragmentation in the social sphere. Sennett has said that "in the idealization of coherence made by the professional planners of cities, there occurs a similar disengagement"[19]. Sennett spoke here of the problems of isolated communities in for example housing projects. The key problem in urban planning is the desire to synthesise and simplify urban space, resulting in a fragmentation of social space.

The problems of a reductive practice can be also applied to Lefebvre's unitary theory. His search for a unitary theory of space seems to be located in the field of philosophy, which he criticises himself for practicing within the mental realm. Furthermore, he simultaneously relies upon and rejects scientific approaches to understand space. In '*Right to the City*' Lefebvre states:

> These sciences [social sciences like linguistics, history, sociology etc.] fragment reality in order to analyse it, each having their method or methods, their sector or domain. After a century, it is still under discussion whether these sciences bring distinct enlightenment to a unitary theory, or whether the analytical fragmentation that they use corresponds to objective differences, articulations, levels and dimensions.[20]

This is also the core question in Lefebvre's paradoxical attempt at unifying space and simultaneously proclaiming that the city is an oeuvre. This merging of his ideas of the production of space and urbanization was motivated by the socio-political upheavals in the 1960s, especially the student demonstrations in May 1968 which were supported by the Situationists. The shared distrust in all institutions and social conventions resulted in a fresh

[19] SENNETT, Richard, 1992. *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life*, p. 98
[20] LEFEBVRE, Henri, 1996. *Writings on Cities*, p. 94.

belief in anarchy. His position is interesting here: at the same time Lefebvre played a key role at the University of Nanterre, being part of an institution, and was involved in the students' uprising. These events have made him recognise even more the duality of the urban space, between daily life and politics. To be able to conceptualise such a schizophrenic city while accepting the philosophies of difference which emerged in the 1960s, Lefebvre uses the notion of 'centrality'[21]. This means the regrouping of differences in relation to each other, rather than a centre of power. This 'centrality' thus replaces the notion of 'totality' by making the distance between mental and social space dialectical. It seems like the only way to find a unity is to accept the existing multiplicity of spaces and to analyse the links between them, but to also recognize that this centrality will never produce a fixed reality. A successful attempt at exactly such linking of existing social spaces is made by Jane Jacobs. The difference with Lefebvre's writing is that Jacobs isn't interested in a philosophical explanation of the city, and is therefore free from "pseudo-scientific jargon"[22]. Writing without an academic background, Jacobs explains through the observing eyes of a citizen how the city is 'produced'. In her critique of urban planning, she argues that:

> Planners have been trained and disciplined in deductive thinking (…). Possibly because of this bad training, planners frequently seem to be less well equipped intellectually for respecting and understanding particulars than ordinary people, untrained in expertise, who are attached to a neighbourhood, accustomed to using it, and so are not accustomed to thinking of it in generalized or abstract fashion.[23]

This critique of urban planning is applicable to Lefebvre's theory, because any discussion of a unitary space is an abstraction and generalisation of the multiple spaces in the city. By giving a practical overview of how specific urban areas (e.g. street, neighbourhood, park) relate to one another, Jacobs doesn't fall into the failure of looking for an all-embracing alternative. Her greatest achievement is therefore that her motive and method correspond; the contents of her writings – the idea that citizens can produce a healthy city themselves –

[21] LEFEBVRE, Henri, 1996. *Writings on Cities*, p. 19.
[22] FISHMAN, Robert, 1982. *Urban Utopias of the Twentieth Century*, p. 268.
[23] JACOBS, Jane, 1993. The *Death and Life of Great American Cities,* p. 576

are also applied in the form of her argument being purely descriptive. Can the same be achieved in drawings of the city?

PRESENTATION AND REPRESENTATION

With the examples of utopian and experimental architectural drawings, I have tried to indicate the problems of how an ideological practice tries to unite and simplify the urban spaces. This seems to contradict the actual experience and needs of the individual in the city, which was explored by the Situationists and explained by Jacobs and Sennett. The question arises how ideas of diversity and disorder can become integrated in architectural drawings. Jane Jacobs has argued that the only role she sees reserved for urban designers is to clarify and explain the order of cities, because "a city cannot be a work of art"[24]. Lefebvre divides social space into three conceptual fields: the spatial practice, the representations of space and representational spaces. The 'spatial practice' is lived directly before it is conceptualized – this is the *perceived* space of society. The 'representations of space' is the conceptualized space of planners, urbanists, social engineers - the *conceived* space of knowledge and ideology. The third, 'representational spaces', is the space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, foremost by artists, writers and philosophers who *describe* space. Therefore, representational spaces tend towards systems of non-verbal symbols and signs. This triad shows the different modes of spatial production, of which most relevant here is the dialectic between the ideological conceiving of space and the artistic describing of space.

[24] JACOBS, Jane, 1993. The *Death and Life of Great American Cities,* p. 485.

Julie Mehretu (fig.6) is an example of an artist who works with urban spaces and - in Lefebvre's terms – works within the representational spaces. The way she addresses the city in her work has been compared to a psychogeographical experience. It is the representation of the dérive on the two-dimensional plane, the human body experiencing space instead of the empty pre-planned physical space. Her mapping of the urban environment, however, envelops more areas than just the sensory experience of the dérive. Silvia Clemente Municio described Mehretu's works in the introduction to her catalogue as "genetic maps issuing from the spatial and temporal fragment arranged in layer upon layer of drawing and painting, where the surface ends up becoming the utopian result where both individuals and societies determine and design the structures directing, controlling, and protecting them"[25]. Through the use of layers, as well as for instance quoting fragments from modernist architectural plans, there is a merging of present, past and future in contrast to the singular time of the dérive or future utopian cities. Accordingly, Lefebvre argued that "representational space is alive: it speaks"[26], and because it speaks of lived situations it immediately implies time. At the core of her diverse visual language are architectural drawings of arenas, stadiums, amphitheatres and plazas. These are not only historical public places but also socio-political structures. Mehretu is therefore not only carrying out historical archaeology, but also searches for a symbolic language of power relationships in the urban space:

> I think architecture reflects the machinations of politics, and that's why I am interested in it as a metaphor for those institutions. I don't think of architectural language as just a metaphor about space. It's about space, but about spaces of power, about the ideas of power…[27]

Through her works, she reveals the true nature of architecture as part of the 'representations of space'. This critical awareness means that Mehretu is never proposing a new physical space, but instead focuses on revealing its problems. The dense layering of signs and

[25] MUSAC (ed.), 2006. *Julie Mehretu. Black City*, p. 6.
[26] LEFEBVRE, Henri, 1991. *The Production of Space,* p. 42.
[27] Julie Mehretu in an interview with Agustin Perez Rubio (April 2006). In: MUSAC (ed.), 2006. *Julie Mehretu. Black City*, p. 29.

symbols literally represents the many spaces of the city. Mehretu explains in '*The Drawing Center's Drawing Papers*' that over the years she has developed a mark-making lexicon, which is a system for understanding her own language of mark making. Each mark is different, with its own characteristics, identity and even social behaviour. This inclusion of both subjects and objects in her work is very interesting, because it implies that the many subjects – individuals in societies – produce the space, in contrast to architectural drawings where the producer of space is the author. Furthermore, Mehretu is aware of the need for a context in which to represent the city. In developing her practice, she changed from placing the marks on the empty white canvas to layering them upon drawings of aerial maps, cities, landscapes and geological tectonics. She calls this a superstructure where history, time and space are fused into one super-context for the narrative - a narrative created by the character-marks which occupy, build and produce the space.

Mehretu visualises the city through a symbolic representation. The earlier mentioned urban planners approached the city absolutely anew, by way of presenting a replacement city. I want to make a new distinction here between the word '*re*presentation' as of an existing site, and 'presentation' which links to a new idea or proposition. This should replace the existing idea that architectural drawings are representational, meaning that it depicts something that is recognisable, but in this case only relates to the imagination rather than to something real. As I noted earlier, the utopian drawings are only iconic representations – resembling architecture - but they cannot depict the totality of the utopian plan. The drawings are part of a presentation of the ideal city. The opposite is happening with Mehretu's drawings. Although as pieces of art they are presenting the artist's vision, in contents the drawings are representing the city. This happens through a more abstract, but still symbolically representational language – here representing means 'standing in for something'. But how

can such a representation of space inform urban planning? Henri Lefebvre noted that "in the spatial practice of neocapitalism…, representations of space facilitate the manipulation of representational spaces…"[28]. This is the ongoing struggle between the conceived and the described space, or respectively the showing of the ideal city and the real city. James Donald argues in his essay '*This, Here, Now: Imagining the Modern City'* that "rebuilding the living city – a city which jumbles together multiple and conflicting differences – therefore requires less a utopian plan than a poetics of political imagination"[29]. Rather than total planning, he proposes that the poetic imagining can entail all the different modes of subjective experience of space, which is sensitive to "the history of modes of mapping and representing space…, perspective…, the conventions of cartography, the simultaneism of cubism, cinematic montage…"[30] etc. Perhaps it is the mapping, rather than planning, which can critically reflect on the current state and condition of the urban environment, on an increasing global scale. Nicholas Bourriaud proposes in his essay '*Topocritic: contemporary art and geographic enquiry'*[31] the notion of 'topocritical art': art which aims to "encourage a 'democracy of viewpoints', a polyculture of the imagination, in other words, the opposite of the monoculture of information"[32]. This is achieved through a 'varifocal' attention, an approach by which the topocritical artist must venture inside *and* maintain a distance to the described scene. This scene is not a surface, but a construction in which the cartographer takes actively part. It negates the danger of cartography as another ideological construct, a "panoptic eye"[33], which was evident in the planning of megastructures. In mind comes the use of the map by Guy Debord to visually describe the dérive (fig.7). The map's surface is broken up

[28] LEFEBVRE, Henri, 1991. *The Production of Space,* p. 59.
[29] DONALD, James. This, Here, Now: Imagining the Modern City, p. 182.
[30] ibid
[31] This essay can be found in the exhibition catalogue 'GNS', published by Palais de Tokyo in 2003, pp. 9-40. Unfortunately, this publication is out of print and I have to rely here on Tim Stott's account of Bourriaud's text in his essay 'Next on the Left, or: 'What Good is a Map if you Know the Way?'.
[32] Quotation of N. Bourriaud, in: STOTT, Tim, 2004. Next on the Left, or: 'What Good is a Map if you Know the Way?', p. 1.
[33] STOTT, Tim, 2004. Next on the Left, or: 'What Good is a Map if you Know the Way?', p. 4.

into smaller parts, becoming a scene of action. It is also a way to see the city as consisting of distinct smaller areas, or neighbourhoods, which is something Jane Jacobs emphasized. She argued that the city needs to be seen in detail – because every area has a different character and problem - to be able to form a specialized understanding of the city as a totality.

As Silvia Municio said earlier, the layering of the existing conditions results ultimately in a utopian surface upon which further building can take place. This idea can be found back in one of Mehretu's titles '*Looking Back to a Bright New Future'*. The key for a successful further production of space is the acceptance of the existing layers and their diversity, instead of seeing space as an empty container without bodies and without history. Lefebvre has made a crucial point in asking: "What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies?"[34] Ideology needs and is dependent on a body, which is in the existing, living city. Lefebvre suggests, for example, that the ideological socialist system was doomed to extinguish because it never achieved to produce its own space: "it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses"[35]. Every society needs to produce its own space, because a society which cannot produce its own space cannot be 'real', and consequently stays in the realm of the ideal. Therefore, a new dialectic relationship needs to be found between representations of space and representational spaces, understood through Lefebvre's earlier mentioned idea of centrality.

[34] LEFEBVRE, Henri, 1991. *The Production of Space,* p. 44.
[35] Ibid*,* p. 54.

THE CITY AS A SYSTEM

Having argued that representing the city provides a more suitable, workable basis for urban planning, the question arises in which ways an overlapping between presenting and representing can take place. This overlapping would be a non-ideological urban representation, which can serve to regenerate the urban environment through a better understanding of the city's system. The question is whether a city has got a system, and if so, what kind of system this is. As argued before, it has to be a system which doesn't homogenise space but allows for a rich diversity. Jane Jacobs compared the city to an ecosystem, in which everything is in flux. Throughout her book, she emphasizes the importance of the street function, on which the human networking takes place. At the same time, the street provides the interrelationships between all other urban areas; the office, the home, the park, places of leisure etc. Jacobs notes that it is crucial for planners to understand these relationships and to acknowledge the importance of the street which was neglected in all the before mentioned projects. She calls the city a system of 'ordered complexity'. The problem of the utopianists was that they misunderstood the city to be a system of 'disordered complexity' and tried to apply a system of 'simplicity' instead.

Which visual language can symbolise such a system of ordered complexity? Whereas Mehretu tries this through a dynamic, colourful mark-making and using layers, Lefebvre reasonably asks "how many maps, in the descriptive or geographical sense, might be needed to deal exhaustively with a given space, to code and decode all its meanings and contents?"[36] His answer is that we have to deal with infinity, because a singular map can only be sufficient for a specialized field of study. The architectural practice in the 1980s used linguistics to research the limits of architectural space. This 'paper architecture', by

[36] LEFEBVRE, Henri, 1996. *Writings on Cities*, p. 85.

architects like Daniel Libeskind, Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi, proclaimed architecture to be at a dead end, as a reaction to the utopian megastructure. They applied deconstruction to their geometrical structures to research how far architecture could be pushed into new configurations. Of particular interest here are the drawings of Daniel Libeskind from the series Micromegas (fig.8). Peter Eisenman notes in his essay '*Representation of the Limit: Writing a 'Not-Architecture''* that his works should be encountered as texts instead of drawings. These textual drawings consequently contribute to a more theoretical field rather than a purely physical one. Eisenman explains that "the act of reading these works, naming them writings, reinforces their status as architecture, for reading insists on their having a significance that as graphics they could not have. As graphics they could only represent architecture."[37] This is because the drawings don't show a clearly defined Euclidean or perspectivist space, and thus abolish architecture as a container which is so typical for the utopian and experimental drawings. In Eisenman's words, the drawings "are not any random set of lines yet at the same time are not a precise set of lines conforming to a representation of an image"[38]. They reject the dialectic of presentation and representation. Lefebvre describes this as the search for a new spatial code as a language common to practice *and* theory. He calls this theoretical 'supercoding'[39], a way to reconcile the mental, social and physical space. For this purpose, Libeskind uses a deconstructed architectural language, so that there's only the signifier – the signified or function seems lost. The newly formed arrangements of signs reflect the innumerable possibilities and relationships of spaces in the city. This opens the works up to the idea of an ordered complexity; next to an apparent chaos of possible interpretations one can feel the architect's control over the blank sheet. In Eisenman's account of the series Micromegas he mentions

[37] LIBESKIND, Daniel, 1991. *Daniel Libeskind: Countersign*, p. 120.
[38] Ibid, p. 121.
[39] LEFEBVRE, Henri, 1991. *The Production of Space,* p. 26.

that these drawings "were carefully projected within the bounds of zero and infinity"[40], which suggests a careful management of even an infinite space.

Nevertheless, Lefebvre criticises such a linguistic approach to understand space, because he claims that writing and speech in our society is located in ideology and dominance. Paradoxically, Lefebvre's unitary theory relies for a major part on linguistics, needing it to carry his arguments and simultaneously rejecting a linguistic approach. On the one hand, he conceives of the city as a semantic and semiotic system, consisting of a group of signs which can be decoded and read. On the other hand he says that a city as system of signification tends towards an ideology by reducing the social practice to a signifier-signified relation. He disapproves of the architect's systems of signification, because he believes that their practice stays amidst systems of writing, projections on paper and visualisations. A social space cannot be compared to a blank page with an inscribed message. Additionally, Lefebvre has observed that in linguistics the social subject is totally eliminated. Libeskind's drawings are in that sense purely theoretical and empty structures, whereas Mehretu's works are inhabited by the 'living and producing' character-marks and as a result feel much more personal and intuitive. However, Utopie's earlier stated comment can also be applied to Mehretu that there is always the problem of the author projecting his/her own representation of the city. If the drawing is understood as a text, Eisenman argues that it has the privilege of the autonomy of the reader - it is open to the reader's interpretation. In this sense, and purely philosophically, the production of space happens outside of the drawings when the reader finds his/her own meaning to the signs. Perhaps such drawings can be illustrative of Jane Jacobs's statement that "cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody"[41].

[40] LIBESKIND, Daniel, 1991. *Daniel Libeskind: Countersign*, p. 121.
[41] JACOBS, Jane, 1993. The *Death and Life of Great American Cities,* p. 312.

CONCLUSION

New ideas about urban systems need new forms of urban planning, and therefore new methods for drawing the city. I have proposed here that architectural drawings need to use a more diverse and symbolic visual language, borrowed from artistic practice, to be able to express ideas of urban diversity and a system of ordered complexity. This means first of all a departure from presenting an ideal city to representing the existing city. The idea of mapping, rather than planning, can serve as a foundation for producing new urban spaces. In addition to cartography, a symbolic representation can involve both physical and social urban spaces, relating to history, politics, economy etc. The emphasis should be on the relationships, the social interactions which shape the city. A symbolic language can take on the form of text, based on linguistics, which allows showing the city as a system of infinite possibilities. This method rejects a finite outcome and the possibility of a synthesis of space. However, a synthesis of space should not altogether be rejected. If it means a coming together of urban spaces and accepting their diversity, it can provide the necessary knowledge to advise citizens in their own spatial production. Similarly, ideology cannot be totally eliminated, whether in the use of cartography or linguistics. This can, however, be applied on a smaller scale rather than trying to embrace the whole city at once. Such an attitude towards space, and the methods described above, can result in topocritical urban drawings – drawings which can realistically inform and result from urban planning. Nevertheless, the urban drawing is never finished – it is no longer an object but an infinite process of drawing the city.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

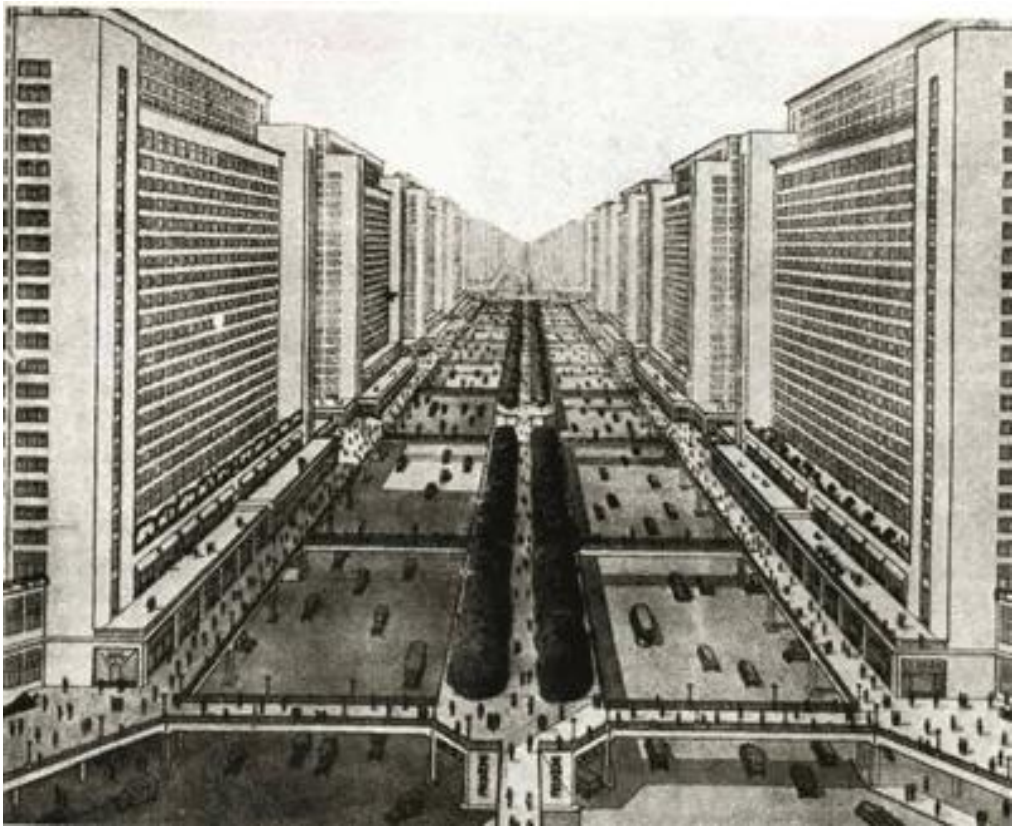
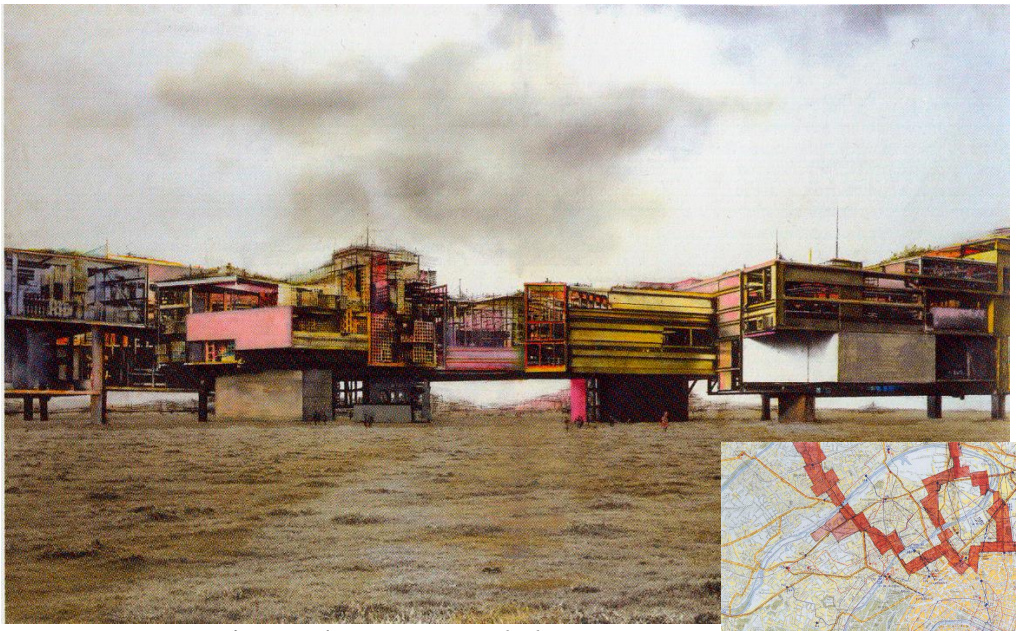


Fig. 1 Le Corbusier, *Radiant City*, 1935



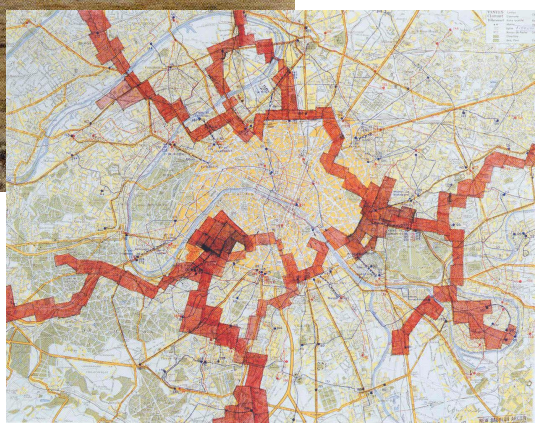


Fig. 2 Constant Nieuwenhuys, *New Babylon*, 1963

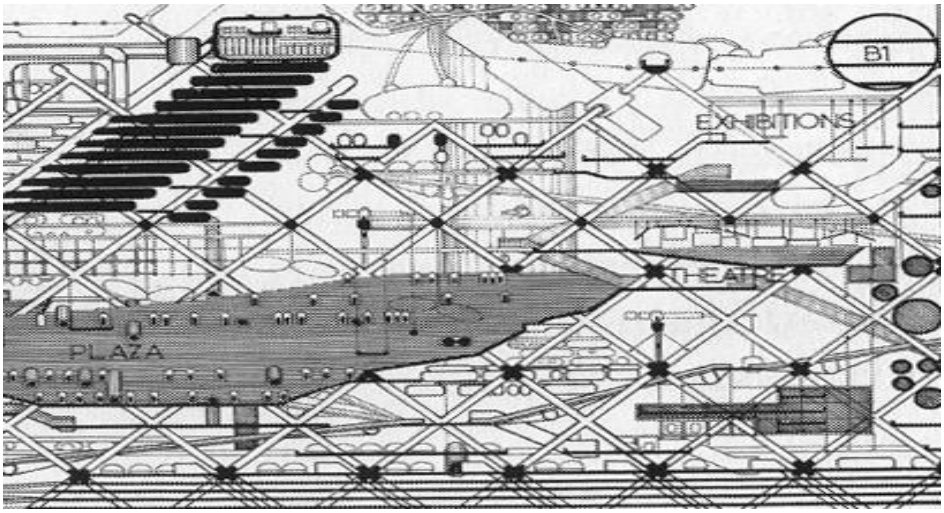


Fig. 3 Peter Cook (Archigram), *Plug-in City (detail)*, 1964

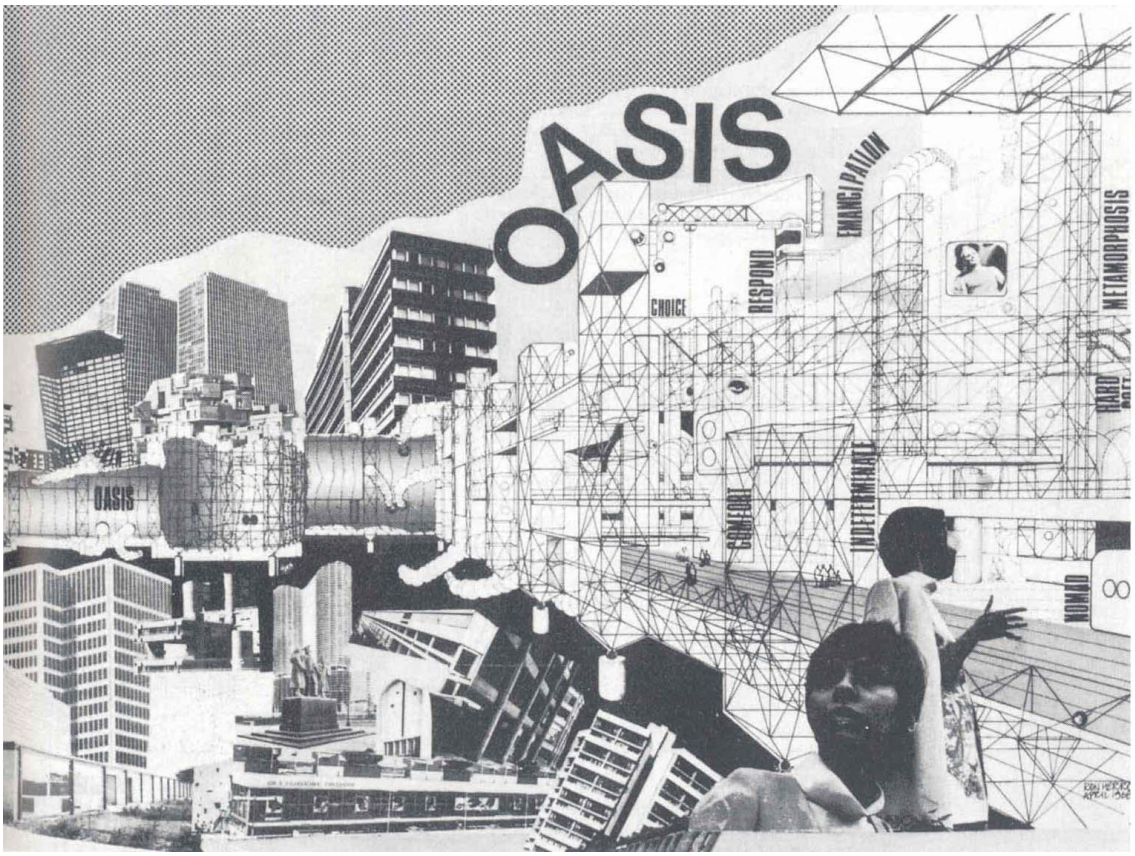


Fig. 4 Ron Herron, *Oasis*, 1968

Fig. 5 Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis, *Exodus; or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture*, 1972

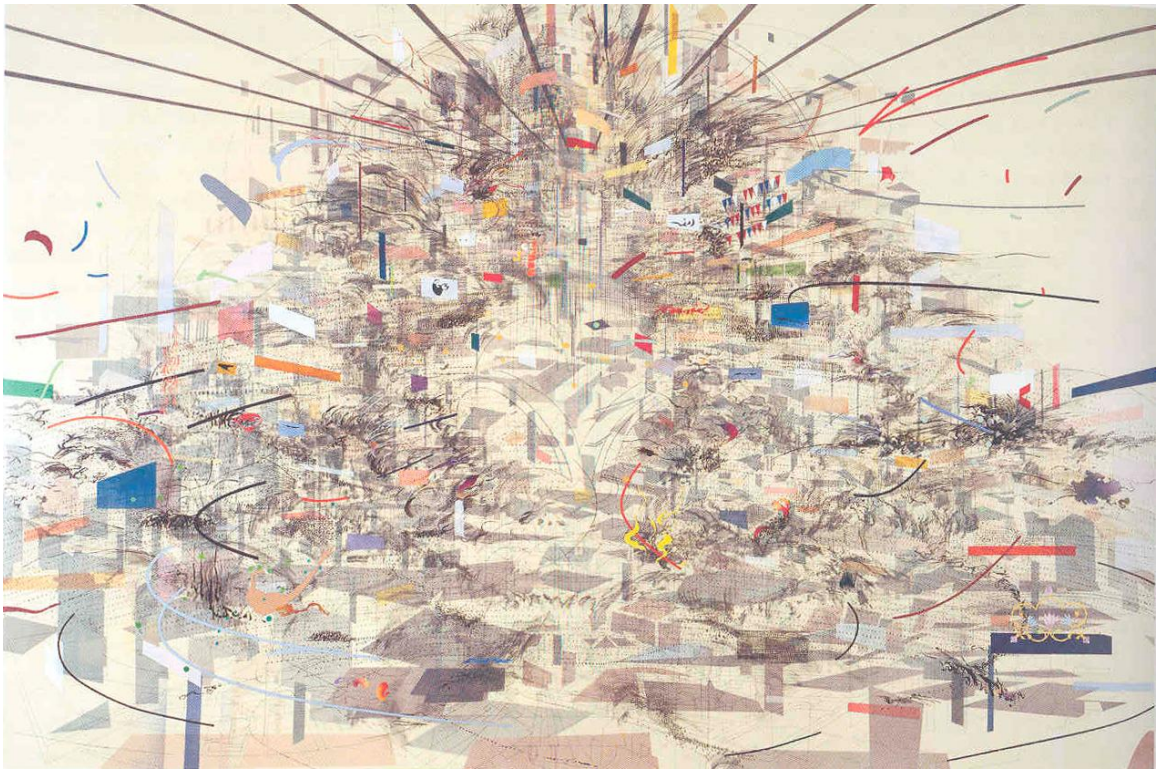


Fig. 6 Julie Mehretu, *Empirical Construction, Istanbul*, 2003

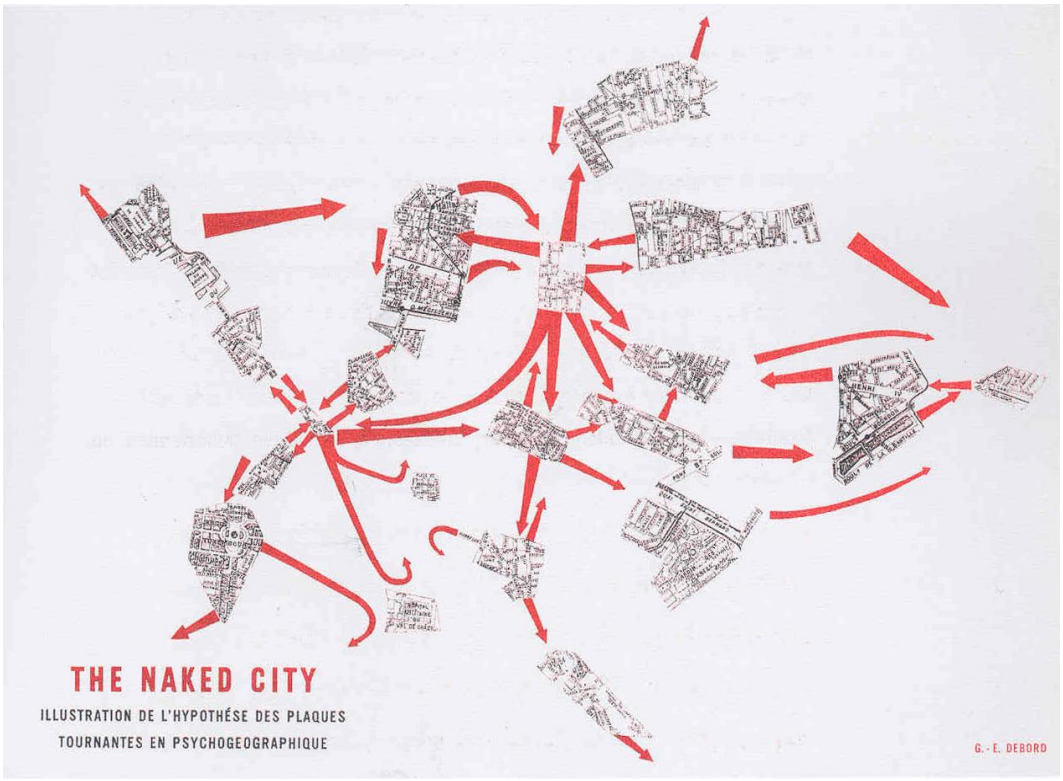


Fig. 7 Guy Debord, *The Naked City*, 1958

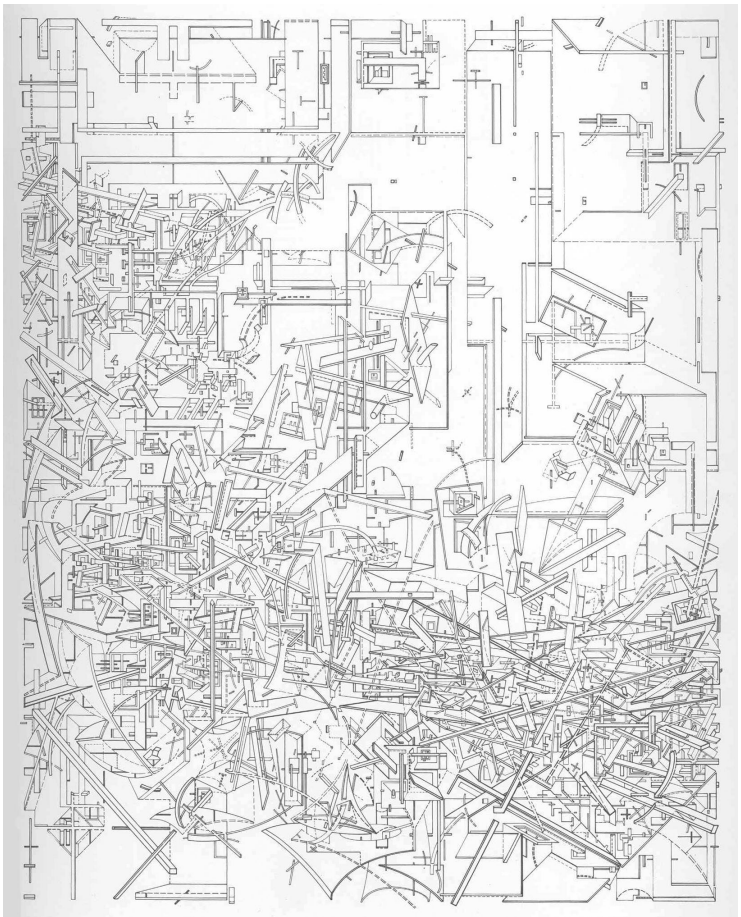


Fig. 8 Daniel Libeskind, *Arctic Flowers* (from the Micromegas series), 1980