Mediating unadaptedness.

A brief for a project is often a list of functional expectations formulated in the form of known programmatic components (a house with three bedrooms, a bathroom, and so on). Each of these components is in a sense abstract, a generalized type of a space. Since the optimal, minimal conditions for, let us say, a bedroom are well defined in ergonomics, comfort and compositions, they are useful tools to efficiently structure our thinking on how to conceive and organize usable space.

On the other hand, when we use a space and turn it into lived space, we do not really care about programs and how they are intended to be used. We react on the immediate possibilities of the space that we use. For example, while a kitchen might be for cooking, it is also – if its spatial configuration enables it – about sneaky late-night snacking, keeping track of family members via the agenda on the fridge or providing a place were less extroverted people meet if we organize a party, just to name a few. In that sense a program is a more abstract, open-ended intermediate level. In our concrete use of space the program fragments into a series of actions and activities. We appropriate our environment through these actions and activities. These acts of appropriation can be thought of as specific events that challenge the action potential our environment affords. These events interact with the spatial conditions at hand and might be enhanced, hindered or triggered by it. It is precisely in the event that the user connects with the physical object of architecture. Based on whether these events were considered during the conception of this physical composition or not, we can draw a distinction between anticipated or unanticipated events.

As a self-referential test-case, I mapped my activities in my apartment while I was writing this text. Since I have no programmatic defined space for writing texts, I chose my office as the closest match. But through this mapping we can see that events happen all over the place. It seems that the terrace and kitchen are places to think, enhanced by overlooking the city while smoking in the first case and by eating and drinking in the second. The bathroom and toilet are introverted places, ideal for reading and revising texts. Mapping only a few hours of 'writing a text on unadapted spaces' shows that this activity cannot be confined to one type of space but is distributed all around the apartment.

For a designer, who conceives a space, it is impossible to anticipate all the events related to all possible activities, even if we only consider the more mundane among them. For a user, who perceives a space, writing a text – just as any other activity or habit – seems a way to appropriate one's house and discover new action- potentials in it.

In what is said before, a distinction is being made between two ways of thinking about use: thinking through general functional components (programs) or thinking through singular experiential activities (events). Evidently, like with any of the concepts relating to representing and referencing formulated before, these two different approaches are not mutually exclusive. They can both serve the same cause and both have qualities and limitations. Thinking through pro- grams is more efficient, while thinking through events is more effective. The first is useful to generate an overview while the second is useful, figuratively and literally, to draw you inside the virtual space of a design. Programs seem to be better at solving problems while events seem to be better at generating action-potential. Responding to generalized programs can lead to uncritical replication of models-to-be-copied of fixed functional typologies while responding to singular events can lead to rigid over-specification.

Another distinction in thinking about use, which is made before, further fragments thinking through events into two types of events: anticipated and unanticipated. This distinction is not drawn for quantitatively reducing the number of unanticipated events and thereby making a better-functioning or more flexible whole by turning unanticipated into anticipated events. Clearly an infinite number of anticipated or unanticipated events 'might' occur and it would be senseless to reduce an infinite number with anything less than another infinite number and mathematically even that subtraction does not make sense. I find the distinction is relevant because it raises my awareness that lived architecture is to an important extent always somehow unprepared, or unadapted. Architecture may (most of the time only temporarily) flawlessly answer briefs formulated in generic programs, but it can never anticipate all the possible events a lived-space entails.

When something tangible or experiential is placed in the world, it might influence actions performed by someone who is confronted with it. While a heavy stone might afford throwing for an adult, it doesn't

afford the same for an infant. The action potential of an architectural space, or any environment for that matter, is defined by the one who perceives it. To some extent this potential might arise independently from what the conceiver might have intended. In that sense the user, by apperceiving it, turns a space into a lived space to actualize the action-potential that architecture affords in a specific way. We could say that the apperceiver reduces the potential of architecture. The infinite amount of possible virtual events, anticipated or not in the conception of a space, is reduced to affordances for actual events, based on properties of the apperceiver. In this sense the physical presence of a space 'in itself' is nothing actual, but, rather, the pure virtuality of infinite possibilities that are or might be actualized in a multitude of ways. On the other hand, the 'apperceiver' ex- pands the potential of architecture. He inscribes what he experiences into the intricate network of memories and anticipations, which can develop new potential, etc. In that sense architecture in never fully actualized by itself. Without an 'apperceiver' it would not make sense, would be dead matter.

Every event that takes place in a space changes our relation with this space. It changes the embodied memories and influences the mental model we have of it. Conflicts and other unanticipated events seem to enlarge the space for appropriation. We might respond to unanticipated events of conflicts in different ways to find a new equilibrium: we accommodate our mental model or we accommodate our behavior or the environment itself. The first means that we inte- grate the unanticipated event in the action potential of the space, the second that we might adapt the action potential of the space by condi- tioning our behavior or influencing the spatial conditions. Off course many nuances between these options are possible, but in any case our mental model of a space changes and we need to perform an act of appropriation.

Accepting the inherently unadapted nature of architecture embodied in the distinction between anticipated and unanticipated events, reminds me to look for ways to enlarge the space for appropriation. For example, conflicts or unconventional functional combinations keep us alert and trigger new events that constantly change our model or mental map of a space, keeping the process of appropriation more consciously in motion. Analogous to how diagrammatic pictures postpone form, I like to concern myself with a so-called 'diagrammatic' architecture or

one not yet fully formed or adapted, that postpones actualization as long as possible. I would describe this as a search for unadapted space, aiming for an environment that is never fully adapted, because it enlarges the space for appropriation.

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