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INTRODUCTION: DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE PERIPHERY

Cameron McEwan and Andreas Lechner

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon. My name is Cameron McEwan, I'm associate professor of architecture at Northumbria University, Newcastle, and with Andreas Lechner, associate professor of architecture at TU Graz, we will be chairing this session on Drawing Attention to the Periphery. I will say a few words of introduction concerning the structure of the session, reflections on the theme and then we will move to the talks.

STRUCTURE

first a note on structure. We have divided the session in two uneven parts with a break inbetween. We have printed some drawings and would encourage you to look at these during the break.

We will have three papers and then a discussion. We would like the papers to be delivered in sequence and then we can invite our speakers to the front and it is at that point that we can take some questions, collectively, and reflect on the ideas presented to encourage a dialogue across the papers. I will introduce the first papers in a moment. Then we can repeat this structure and Andreas will introduce the next three papers. Broadly they are organised into a set concerning theories and practices of landscape in the first part; and then a set of papers addressing the question of the peripheral palimpsest, if we can summarise so reductively...

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REFLECTIONS ON THE THEME

In our call for papers we wanted to draw attention to the periphery, its typologies, spatial structure, ideas, and narratives – whether of love or loathing. Implicit was a shift in emphasis from what is the city, to what is the periphery, what is other than city. We argue that if the last century was a century of cities [Berlin, Mumbai, Beijing], maybe this is a century of peripheries, that which is between the capitals. We want to ask, what are the ideas, projects and modes of representation that might begin to articulate the urban condition today as the city extends into a continuous periphery [with an inflection of Lars Lerup]? Wrapped by the Anthropocene.

In general, the centre-periphery relation is usually employed as an organisational tool to study a point [urban core, city centre] and that which surrounds it [nature, region, the periphery] and from which we can identify conditions such as centres of attention, of economy, of population, and of culture, or peripheral places relative to those centres.

However, what interests us is less the binary opposition that is suggested by the centre-periphery relationship, but the lived experience of peripheries is not really so neat. It is sometimes all figure, sometimes all ground, often an entangled randomness. We are interested in the entanglements of peripheral conditions and the way the periphery transgresses situations and encourages transgressions. Peripheries are suburbs, exurbs, fringes, edges, outskirts, sprawl, infrastructure, big boxes, agriculture, geotechnics, old villages, new towns, fields, landfill...

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ANTHROPOCENE

In the time of the Anthropocene, those conditions are radically altered. Scale changes so that we speak less about the regional [city-periphery] or even a global [north-south] spatial or social condition. Instead, we speak of a planetary scale. We speak less of distinctions between what is nature and what is urban, but its continuities and inflections. Temporality has altered, so that the deep time of the planet is entangled with labour, earthly material, imagination, the infrastructural space of geotechnics, modes of thinking and making architecture and settlements.

The question of human agency alters so that to speak of the human as a centre [Anthropos] seems to neglect the multispecies, human, and non-human, other than humans, with whom we share collective life as articulated by Elke yesterday. These conditions are most demonstrably articulated in urban peripheries, or the in-between spaces of cities.

The centre-periphery interplay is fraught with contradictions, indifferences, and ambivalences, and not least the aura of coloniality, which needs to be deconstructed. Yet there is an allure to addressing the periphery as shadowland, frontier, or the in-between, a place apart from whatever is “centre,” a transgressive place.

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DRAWING

In parallel with our theoretical reflections, we invited papers that use drawing as a critical tool for thinking through some of the issues we raised in the call for papers. We are interested in how to represent the periphery, how to draw the periphery, and hence the call has this word play on drawing attention to the periphery and drawing to find out. Drawing is a device for thinking through issues, for speculating, analysing, and for provoking further reflection. It is a disciplinary tool for critical thinking on the pressures and the urgencies of the day [Anthropocene, urbanisation, spatial justice], and a design methodology that we might begin to help define a collective task, alternative narratives, practices, and new futures.

So we will see an expanded idea of what “drawing attention to the periphery” means in these next presentations.

Now I will introduce our first three speakers.

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Papers 1-3

Lorens Holm is an architect and Reader in History and Theory of Architecture at the University of Dundee, where he runs the design research unit *rooms+cities*, which conducts research on city morphology and artefacts. His written work focuses on reconciling psychoanalytic thought on subjectivity with contemporary architectural/urban practice. In 2019, he organised the AHRA conference *Architecture & Collective Life*. Publications include *Reading Architecture with Freud and Lacan: shadowing the public realm* (2022), *Brunelleschi Lacan Le Corbusier: architecture space and the construction of subjectivity* (2010) and, with John Hendrix, *Architecture and the Unconscious* (2016). His papers have appeared in *Architecture & Culture*, *ARQ*, *JoA*, *Perspecta*, *Critical Quarterly*, *Assemblage*, and other journals.

Sandra Bartoli is a landscape architect and architect, co-founder with Silvan Linden, of the Büros für Konstruktivismus in Berlin. Her research focuses on sites of the entanglement of nature and city, such as Tiergarten in Berlin. In 2019, Bartoli co-edited the book *Tiergarten: Landscape of Transgression* (Park Books) and was co-curator with Silvan Linden and Florian Wüst of the exhibition project *Licht Luft Scheisse. Perspectives on Ecology and Modernity* with shows at Berlin Botanical Garden Museum and the nGbK [Society for Visual Arts]. From 2017 to 2018, Bartoli began work on the research theme “The City’s Future Natural History” as an Endowed Professor for Visionary Forms of Cities at the Institute for Art and Architecture, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Bartoli is full professor at the Architecture Faculty of Munich University of Applied Sciences.

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Shaun Young is an architectural practitioner and Assistant Professor in Architecture at Northumbria University. He has led design studios at Kingston University, London; Birmingham City University; the University of Nottingham; and Newcastle University. His practice-led doctoral thesis explored how concepts, techniques, and strategies from the Picturesque inform contemporary architectural design. His recent design research centres around building commissions for charities and artist collectives in the North East of England. Shaun has worked in architectural practice for Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, DRDH Architects, Adam Khan Architects, Pitman Tozer Architects, Matheson Whiteley, and in Bern, Switzerland, for Architektbüro A. Furrer und Partner.

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Papers 4-6

Laura Szyman is a design research PhD student, working between architecture, illustration, and academia at RMIT, examining the spatial impact of market-driven housing development through novel illustration methods. Her awards include the Anne Butler Memorial Prize, a Commendation in the AIA Graduate Awards, the John Storey Memorial Scholarship at University of Tokyo, the Fender Katsalidis Traveling Scholarship at TU Delft, and the RMIT Award for Design Excellence. She has worked for Melbourne firms and teaches across courses in the Bachelor and Master of Architecture at RMIT. Laura's research has been shown at Melbourne Design Week, Melbourne NOW, and elsewhere.

Petra Eckhard is senior scientist and director of GAM.Lab at the Faculty of Architecture at Graz University of Technology since 2018. She studied American literature and cultural studies as well as media studies in Graz, Bern, and New York. She currently researches narrative architecture, the connection between architecture and writing, as well as anti-canonical building structures of the 19th and 20th centuries. She is the author of *Chronotopes of the Uncanny* (transkript, 2011) and editor of *GAM - Graz Architecture Magazine*.

Daniel Gethmann is Associate Professor and teaches Cultural Studies and Design Theory at the Institute of Architectural Theory, Art History and Cultural Studies at Graz University of Technology. He was director of the OeNB research project: "Ferdinand Schuster (1920-1972): The Architectonic Works" and published his latest book *Feld. Modelle, Begriffe und architektonische Raumkonzepte* in 2020. He is executive editor of *GAM - Graz Architecture Magazine*.

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Cameron McEwan is associate professor of architecture at Northumbria University, UK and director of the AE Foundation, an independent research institute for architecture and education. Cameron's research focuses on the relationship between architectural typology, representation, and subjectivity to engage critical approaches to the urban/Anthropocene question. His work appears in journals and venues, including: *Architecture and Culture*, *Drawing On*, *Graz Architecture Magazine*, *Journal of Architectural Education*, *Lo Squaderno*, *MONU*, the Venice Architecture Biennale and elsewhere. Cameron's editorial projects include *Accounts* (Pelinu, 2019); *Architecture and Collective Life* for *Architecture and Culture* (T&F/Routledge, 2020); and *Care and Critical Action* for *Lo Squaderno* (2023). Cameron's book *Analogical City* (Punctum, 2023) argues for architecture's status as a critical project. With Andreas Lechner, Cameron leads the international network Peripheries.

Andreas Lechner is Associate Professor at the Institute of Design and Building Typology at TU Graz and founder of Studio Andreas Lechner that combines his parallel careers as architect, educator, and writer. Following his Ph.D. in 2009 he was a visiting researcher at the Università Iuav di Venezia and the Royal Danish Academy in Copenhagen and held lectures and visiting professorships in Copenhagen, Genoa, Hamburg, Istanbul, and Innsbruck. He won first prize at European 10 and participated in the second Istanbul Design Biennial 2014 and the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale 2016. He completed his Habilitation in 2017, and published it as award winning book, whose English version was published as *Thinking Design – Blueprint for an Architecture of Typology* (Park Books 2021). He is principal investigator in the three-year interdisciplinary research project "Counterintuitive Building Types" funded by the Austrian Research Promotion Agency, co-editor at *GAM – Graz Architecture Magazine*, a member of the Graz Old Town Expert

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Committee, and currently Visiting Scholar at Politecnico di Milano.