

ARCH&UD 98T: THE INFORMATIONAL BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Winter 2008, UCLA Department of Architecture and Urban Design

Wednesday 11am-2:00pm, Perloff Hall - 1220

Instructor: Ewan Branda

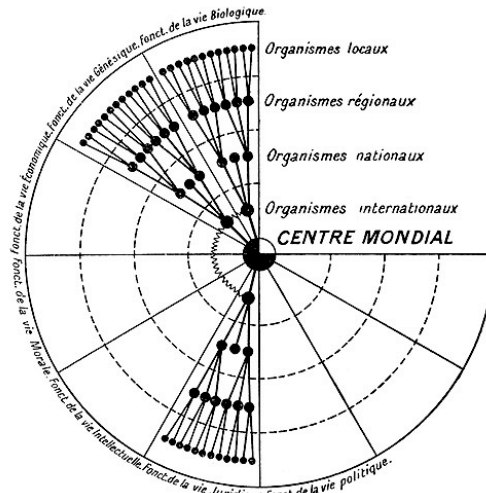
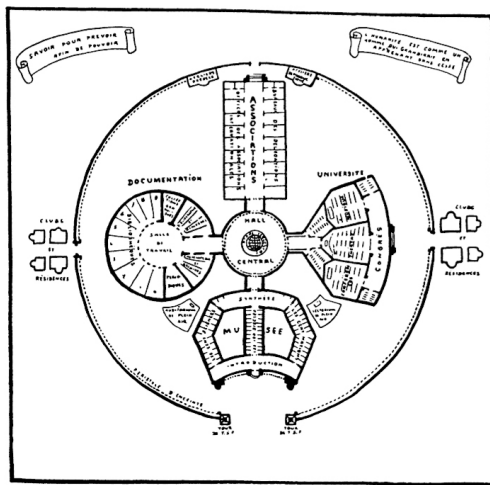
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Paul Otlet, *Schematic plan of the Mundaneum (1925), Organisation mondiale (1934)*

This seminar interprets the built environment as a vast system for the storage, transmission, and reception of information. It tracks the emergence of what we will be calling “information spaces” in European modernism during the period between 1800 and 1970. As much actual as virtual, these spaces demonstrate a tendency in modernity to think about architectural and urban space according to metaphors and methods of information organization. By examining them we will see how information operates as an invisible form of organization in the built environment both historically and today, and so speculate on architecture’s place within a the modern information society.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 – JANUARY 9

MODES OF INFORMATION, MODES OF ARCHITECTURAL THINKING

What are some of the meanings of the word “information”? What is the difference between architectural design and architectural interpretation? How are architectural history, theory, and criticism distinct ways of thinking about the built environment and how do they overlap?

WEEK 2 – JANUARY 16

THE RISE OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY, 1830-1980

What do we mean when we talk about the “information society”? What are some of its foundational ideas, and which of these can we usefully apply to the analysis of the built environment?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Mattelart, Armand. *The Information Society: An Introduction*. London; Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003. Pages 1-46.

Beniger, James R. *The Control Revolution : Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986. Pages v-x, 1-44.

Nora, Simon, and Alain Minc. *The Computerization of Society*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980. Pages vii-xx, 1-29.

The Information Machine. Eames Office, 1958, 10 min. Film available at <http://www.archive.org/details/InformationM> [For best resolution, click on MPEG2 in the Play/download menu on the left-hand side of the window]

WEEK 3 – JANUARY 23

SPACE-INFORMATION-KNOWLEDGE: 3 MODELS

What does it mean to say that the built environment operates as an information archive? On what precedents can we base such a claim? What are some models of the informational built environment?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Empiricism. Webcast available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20040610.shtml

Yates, Frances. *The Art of Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966. Pages xi-xiii, 1-16, 129-144.

Di Palma, Vittoria. “Fragmentation, Multiplication, Permutation: Natural Histories and Sylvan Aesthetics from Bacon to Evelyn”. In *Fragments: Architecture and the Unfinished: Essays Presented to Robin Middleton*, ed. B. Bergdoll and W. Oechslin. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2006. Pages 233-244.

Mattelart, Armand. “Mapping Modernity: Utopia and Communications Networks”. In *Mappings*, ed. Denis E. Cosgrove. London: Reaktion Books, 1999. Pages 169-192.

WEEK 4 – JANUARY 30

INFORMATION_SPACE_0: MEGATECHNICS AND METALANGUAGE

How did an emerging information society emerging in the 19th century provide new ways of thinking about the built environment? What were some of the useful metaphors it provided?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Mumford, Lewis. *The Myth of the Machine*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967. Pages 3-5, 163-194.

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. Pages 16-32.

Choay, Françoise. *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century*. New York: G. Braziller, 1970. Pages 7-19, 24-27.

Vidler, Anthony. "The Scenes of the Street: Transformations in Ideal and Reality, 1750-1871". In *On Streets*, ed. Stanford Anderson. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978. Pages 29, 86-96.

WEEK 5 – FEBRUARY 6

INFORMATION_SPACE_1: AMBIENT DATABASES

What alternatives to the museum did a new environmental awareness in the 19th century offer?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

The Grand Tour. Webcast available at
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20020530.shtml

The Great Exhibition. Webcast available at
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20060427.shtml

Szegedy-Maszak, Andrew. "A Perfect Ruin: Nineteenth-Century Views of the Colosseum." *Arion* Winter (1992). Pages 1-15.

Baedeker, Karl. *Italy: Handbook for Travellers*. Coblenz: Baedeker, 1872. Selection.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Transformation: or, the Romance of Monte Beni*. Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1860. Selection.

Pelizzari, Maria Antonella. "Retracing the Outlines of Rome: Intertextuality and Imaginative Geographies in Nineteenth-Century Photographs". In *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, ed. Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan. London: Tauris, 2003. Pages 55-73.

Kaufman, Edward N. "The Architectural Museum from World's Fair to Restoration Village." *Assemblage*, no. 9 (1989). Pages 20-30.

WEEK 6 – FEBRUARY 13

INFORMATION_SPACE_2: MODERNIST INFORMATION UTOPIAS

What are information utopias, and why did they suddenly appear at the start of the 20th century? In what ways did the doctrines of architectural modernism conflict with an informational view of the built environment?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Modernist Utopias. Webcast available at

http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20050310.shtml

Biography of Paul Otlet. Film available at <http://www.archive.org/details/paulotlet> [For best resolution, click on MPEG2 in the Play/download menu on the left-hand side of the window]

Wells, H. G. *World Brain*. London: Methuen & Co., 1938. Pages 81-88.

Frampton, Kenneth. "The New Objectivity" and "Le Corbusier and the Esprit Nouveau." In *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. Pages 130-141, 149-160.

Teige, Karel. "Mundaneum" (1929). Reprinted in *Oppositions Reader*, ed. K. Michael Hays. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998. Pages 589-597.

WEEK 7 – FEBRUARY 20

INFORMATION_SPACE_3: DYSTOPIA AND RESISTANCE

What were some criticisms of the information society and its built environment?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution. Jean-Luc Godard, 1965, 99 min. Film available on course web site and on reserves at the Powell Instructional Media Lab.

Re-read Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine*. Pages 3-5.

Ellul, Jacques. *The Technological Society*. New York: Knopf, 1964. Pages v-xii, xxv-xxvi, 3-14.

WEEK 8 – FEBRUARY 27

INFORMATION_SPACE_4: ENVIRONMENTS IN THE MIND

How did postwar cognitive models suggest that the human mind works together with the built environment to create an information space?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Boulding, Kenneth. *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956. Pages 3-31.

Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960. Pages 1-13, 46-90.

Staniszewski, Mary Anne. "René D'harnoncourt's Vistas and Affinities and the Museum Of 'Primitive' Art". In *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998. Pages 110-128.

WEEK 9 – MARCH 5

INFORMATION_SPACE_5: TRANSMISSION AND COMMUNICATION

How did new ideas about information communication and semiotics establish a new informational role for the built environment during the postwar era?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

A Communications Primer. Eames Office, 1953, 21 min. Film available at http://www.archive.org/details/communications_primer

Barthes, Roland. "The Rhetoric of the Image" (1964). In *Image-Music-Text*, ed. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. Pages 32-51.

Czarnowski, Thomas V. "The Street as a Communications Artifact". In *On Streets*, ed. Stanford Anderson. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978. Pages 207-212.

Scott-Brown, Denise and Robert Venturi. "A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas". In *Learning from Las Vegas*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1972. Pages 3-85.

WEEK 10 – MARCH 12 – NO WEEKLY WRITING DUE

INFORMATION_SPACE_6: VIRTUAL MACHINES

How did ideas about information messages in dynamic systems suggest new ways of looking at the organization and inhabitation of the built environment?

REQUIRED PREPARATION

Centre Georges Pompidou. Richard Copans, 1997, 26 min. Film available on course web site.

Colquhoun, Alan. "Critique." *Architectural Design* 47, no. 2 (1977).

Crompton, Dennis. "Centre Pompidou: A Live Centre of Information." *Architectural Design* 47, no. 2 (1977).