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NEW EYES—NEW VIEWS

Aleksandr Delev

Disruption of the designers' visual episteme

Let us begin with the statement that our reality is contingent, which basically means anything can happen. The perception of its properties depends on our capability of seeing and defining these. Regarding our current times which are increasingly co-opted with new technologies and information fields, a new view on things and of the construct «reality» is emerging. New smart concepts and entities on the civilisatory scale are challenging our thinking and practice anew. While we acknowledge shifting paradigms, other doubts and questions manifest themselves: Are we humans not the smartest on earth? Or is it more about accepting a new sort of tech-species as an integral part of our human life? The «new eyes» set off through technologies enable us to see and perceive the existing world and new, created things differently. The view on the object has become a different one, since we can read multiple patterns through algorithms. Some chosen examples will guide us through some of the more speculative moments of thought.

I The 4th Narcissistic Insult

At the advent of the New Age, the Age of Aquarius, humanity is experiencing its fourth paradigm-shifting narcissistic insult. Two of them were drafted for the first time by the 19th century German mind-science pioneer Emil du Bois-Reymond, followed by Sigmund Freud who added the third, his own alleged discovery. Both essentially concluded that science outraged a «naive self-love of the humanity»⁽¹⁾. It started with the cosmological (Copernicus: the earth is not in the center of the universe), the evolutionary (Darwin: the human is a derivative of the evolutionary process), the psycho-analytic (Freud: the unconscious is at the driver's seat, rather than the conscious mind). A few decades ago, Georg Klaus⁽²⁾ proposed a new era during which the human realizes that the World is seen and understood not only by the mind of a human thinking subject,⁽³⁾ but is conceived by new smart entities with their own agentic power which could potentially outpace us in terms of our ability to comprehend and intellectualize. The rise of the new «Alien» does not necessarily mean that we dehumanize ourselves or our thinking, but rather enable something «other» to happen: by means of virtualisation of the mind which will consequently invent new forms of relations to things.

To see objects and define them according to the subject's relation to its environment is known as object-subject correlation. The world around us consists of its phenomena and the metaphysical-transcendental subject structures it represents. To overcome the limitations of such a perception, in other words, to break with the correlationism model,⁽⁴⁾ one has to consider the post-metaphysical modus, as Quentin Meillassoux proposes.⁽⁵⁾ That would mean to give the objects their own (ontological) identity and make them less dependent on

our limited skills of description and decoding of things. For Meillassoux, contemporary science is offering new models of explanation which are overcoming the conceptual frame of correlationism philosophy. To enhance the thought: There is something absolute that exists independent from our thinking of it.

Without drifting into «logical mysticism»⁽⁶⁾, could new smart entities record an environment with their sensors and open a new perspective on the world which we have not seen before?

II Ubiquitous Sensoring

The operative apparatuses set off by technological imperatives are increasingly embedded in the active reproduction of systems. It is not only the mechanic-Archimedean machines but rather the information-processing senses that are the ones to be watched. For example, through the installed sensors (a crucial element of operative behaviour) they have the possibility to «see» and recognize structures and patterns within the «Dust of Data», the new abstract information field.

To map means to structure the known and the possible. The map is cartographing the seen planetary territory with tools and epistemes developed within the scientific context, and re-creates a simulacra of the external locality like the Earth.⁽⁷⁾ The sensors, as our prolonged organs, installed on technical devices like satellites, expand the scale of the seen: The ongoing mapping with associated epistemes.

For instance, the name «Blue Planet» most likely appeared in the 1960s as a common term referring to the large amount of oceans seen when the first satellites left the earth's thermosphere. These satellites (eyes) gave a long awaited view of the Earth from

above, revealing an answer to Stewart Brand's question he posited in 1967, «Why haven't we seen a photograph of the whole earth yet?» who, a year later, started his famous «Whole Earth Catalog» series with the earth's photographs on the cover of the issues. What will we see next?

At this year's Google annual developer conference, the tech company announced⁽⁸⁾ the integration of the Google Lens in camera-based applications which would serve in a «proactive» manner, meaning that the camera-seen-field would browse the real world and merge it with augmented reality content. Through the interface devices like smartphones, one could expand the view—or—at least expand the simulacra and raise the spectacle of the virtual by creating a superpanoptic surveillance of individuals as in the film *The Circle* (2017). Dividual is, according to Gilles Deleuze, a human subject which is «endlessly divisible and reducible to data representations.»⁽⁹⁾ At this point one could say that we infrastructurally share the world with other species which can pattern our existence and behaviour.

III Within the Cloud Dust

The materiality and structure of objects becomes a new topic of relevance for architecture when considering the information field, a sort of Dust of Data.⁽¹⁰⁾ Its departing point of thought is making new structures and objects visible within or in relation to them. The study of the «relation between parts, of that between parts and wholes, and of the boundaries between parts» is what Luciana Parisi calls *mereotopology*⁽¹¹⁾. While in traditional geometry a line is one-dimensional, a surface, two-dimensional, and an object is a three-dimensional thing, this new perspective seems to be a kind of fractal one because it first acknowledges a non-dimensionality, in other words a continuous topological surface beyond the usual gridded one. The way information gives shape to structures is not an analog procedure anymore, and it is only in relation to tools and devices that these actions are possible. In this sense, such operators as the algorithms are «not simply instructions to be performed but have become performative entities.»⁽¹²⁾ This perspective of thought comes to exist by an apparatus that combines labor and technology with a mathematical description relying on artificial intelligence.

As mentioned before, the parts and single points of the whole, transcribed within the Dust of Data, are becoming the focus of interest. As Benjamin Bratton defines it in the chapter Address Layer⁽¹³⁾: Things which are seen are also addressable. This means, things which are recorded can be indexed and exposed for material definitions which were not visible before. By manipulating these addressed things, entirely new forms can be achieved which supersede decade-old recipes for architectural typologies, postmodern narratives of design and most importantly, the normative 20th century Modernism reduced to what we know today as «minimal geometrical shape». The Post-War Modernism characterized by architects like Frei Otto tried to integrate engineering aspects of form-making to come to new solutions. Regarding today's possibilities, the Deep Address «allows for opportunities to visualize the hyper-materiality that is Dust through posthuman eyes.»⁽¹⁴⁾ Did the cavernous cloud of Christian Kerez at the Venice Biennale 2016 offer us a new possible approach of creating?

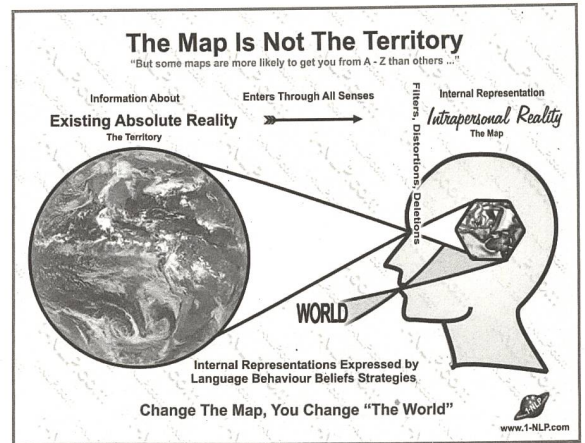
A new virtuality, substituted with a new web of signs, creates a hyper-reality which needs to be navigated in a different manner, leaving behind the known aesthetic criteria and creating new visual epistemes based on «posthuman intelligences which process such resolutions of material information.»⁽¹⁵⁾ It seems like the technological modernity is ahead of us but where is the cultural modernity to comprehend and appropriate the novelty of the new reality? The architects' perception might be alienated (or insulted) by such ideas but it is necessary to remain open to the upcoming turn of a new complexity embraced by new eyes.

Aleksandr Delev, born 1988, is studying M.Sc. Architecture at the Bauhaus University in Weimar, Germany. He co-founded ArchitekturApotheke, Am Strand Magazine in Leipzig, was co-editor of *horizonte* journal in Weimar and interned at ARCH+. In 2017 he initiated the PDF Series «Silicity Protocols» focusing on the technological condition affecting architecture which was exhibited at re:publica in Berlin and «Postcards from the Anthropocene» in Edinburgh. His work engages developments in contemporary culture, aesthetics, and media to seek a new agency for architectural production.

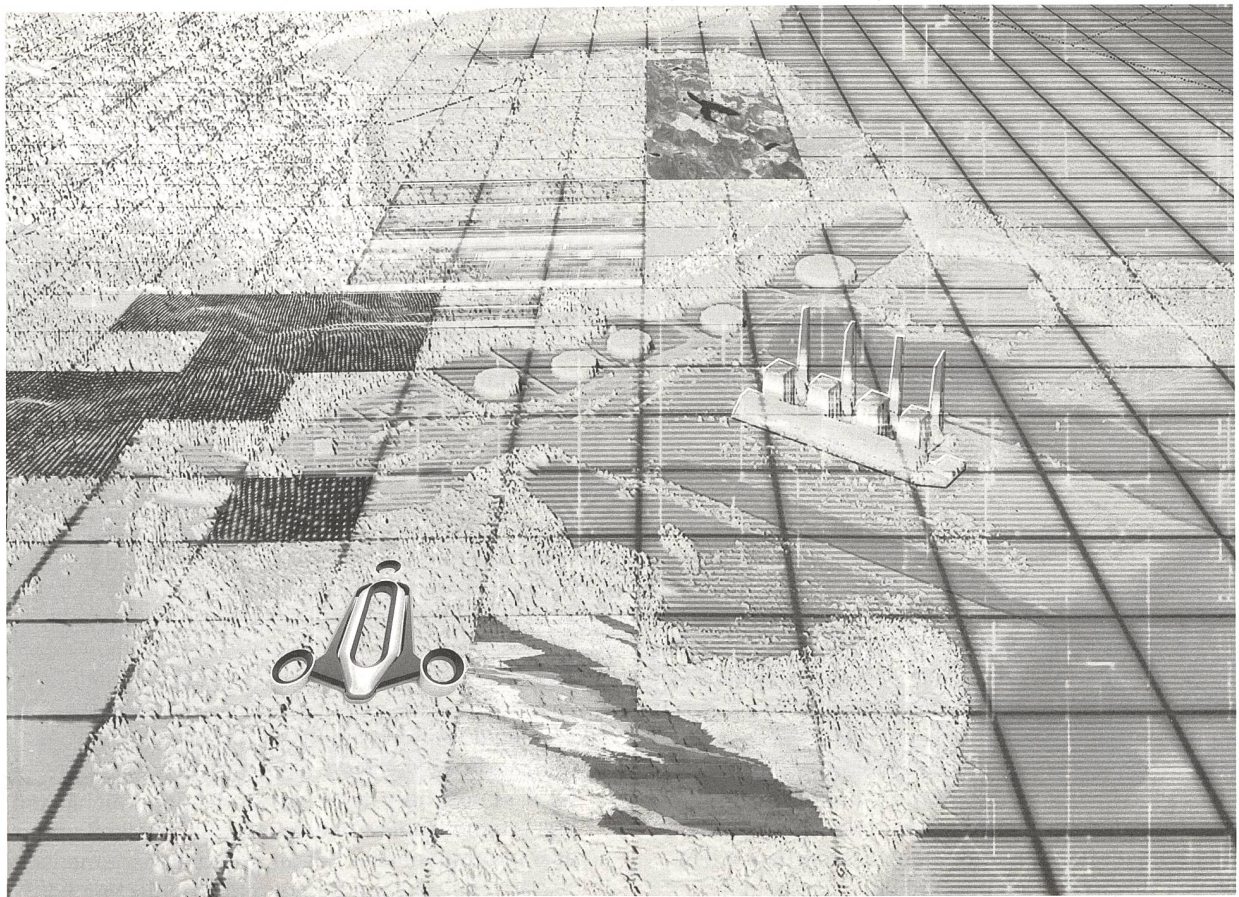
A



B



C



A Evolution of A.I. Picture: Aleksandr Delev, 2018
 C LIDAR Views. Picture: Aleksandr Delev, 2018

B The Map Is Not The Territory, ANON