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tion de camps géopolitiques hostiles aux étrangers, tandis que la politique à courte vue des lobbies dans les états industriels freine systématiquement toute lutte efficace contre la catastrophe climatique globale. En regard de ce zonage et de ce morcèlement croissants d'un monde s'éloignant toujours plus du village global de McLuhan, les propos de continuité architecturale discutés ici prennent une dimension utopique surprenante qui, en moins euphorique, rappelle la solitude que connurent les utopistes des années 60 après l'échec de mai 68 – notamment Claude Parent et Paul Virilio – en se retrouvant dans la réalité déconcertante des années 70, avec en main un modèle d'avenir dont personne ne voulait plus.

# English

André Bideau (pages 14–19)

English translation: Rory O'Donovan

## Grounding space

Parent, Virilio and the theory platform Architecture Principe

At a critical key point in late modernist theory Parent, together with urban planner and (subsequent) philosopher Paul Virilio, suggested a radical departure from additive, zoned habitat. According to their theory of the “Fonction oblique”, an architecture of the oblique, the issue was to activate the ground as both context and surface, to conceptually destabilize the architectural object: a, literally, “fundamental” process which, in recent years, has gained renewed interest. Parent developed an architectural hardware by shifting design from floor plan and facade to the modulation of sectional sequences and surface reliefs. His research on an architecture of the oblique does not, however, confine itself to building projects. The following contribution also discusses the texts and hypothetical projects with which an attempt was made to dynamicise and densify space.

*We must battle against form, against its universality and its uniqueness. We must question its splendour, its unchallenged expressive force and introduce a contradiction into it.* Claude Parent

From the mid sixties onwards Parent examined non-orthogonal sectional figures in which novel constellations of structure and use could be tested. Many of these projects are not so much objects as experimental settings seeking for a performative definition of space to achieve its breakthrough. These would, it was hoped, overcome a definition of the object valid since the start of Modernism by arriving at a new statement on corporeality: the inclined surface. In order to formulate this “Fonction oblique” Parent and Virilio addressed mass housing, rejecting the standardised interior with its addition of white

space modules. They intended to establish a new system of coordinates in place of Functionalist typologies, and to replace the Cartesian order of ceiling and wall. The diagonal of the Fonction oblique introduced in the section continuously stretches floor areas making the interior a continuous surface. One aspect of the performativity of this new spatial dispositive is the assimilation of diverse functions. The Fonction oblique was intended to overcome both the partition wall and the individual piece of furniture. Architecture thus becomes neither container nor framework but a “support”.

The platform *Architecture Principe*, founded in 1963 by Parent and Virilio, is most certainly not the only programme in the sixties that called for an architecture as an infrastructural system. The special thing about *Architecture Principe* is the strategy employed to reconceptualise space on the basis of its surfaces. Inwardly the architecture of the oblique appears as an interface, externally as a relief. In retrospect Virilio was to describe this new context as follows: “The work of the group *Architecture Principe*, not so much ‘utopian’ as, in the true sense ‘atypical’, was a serious attempt against all odds to develop a different relationship to the natural ground, to the geomorphology of place and, as we have seen, also to the artificial ground of the apartment, that arrangement of human activities.”<sup>1</sup>

Experimental settings and forms of notation

In his designs dating from the time of *Architecture Principe* Parent suppressed floor plan and facade as agendas. For these offered no potentials for the new functional allocations and the continuous ground generating the motion space of “circulation habitable”. By reducing his spatial dispositions to abstract diagrams Parent anticipated a form of notation that has had a successful career in the past decade. The same can be said of a series of terms which, as a result of their application by *Architecture Principe* to the theme “ground”, were already sharply defined: infrastructure, texture, scape, all of which were to become fixed points for the nineties neo avant-garde. Why?

After years of linguistic, typological and morphological investigations the surplus meanings celebrated by postmodernism and deconstructivism in the dialectics of object and context were gradually dismantled. In their place new phenomenologies of space and surface developed a narrative potential. Architectural discourse focussed on media and communication fostered the dialectics of flow and corporeality, animation and material nature. Against the background of this semantic reduction and the “spatial turn” made in the nineties *Fonction oblique* possesses a definite relevance that lies, to an extent, in the representational techniques employed by Parent. Spatial systems reduced to formulas are “precursors” of those forms of notation and animation that were first to achieve a breakthrough with the help of the digital representation of space.

Along with the forms of inscribing space the concept of the work itself also altered. As alternatives to the standard definition of the object were a key issue of *Architecture Principe*, for Parent working on section, model and diagram was decisive.<sup>2</sup> At that time, as was later the case with the “topological architecture” of the nineties, a fundamental rejection of the sculpturally motivated placing of architectural objects surfaced. In both cases through the mingling of inside and outside, programme and structure, movement patterns and architectural hardware a new context was opened up that allowed architecture to mutate from a typologically coded object to an infrastructure.<sup>3</sup>

This new understanding of the object is also a consequence of design processes, the use of which involves the addition, overlaying and manipulation of previously *concealed information*. With the emergence of CAD from the early nineties onwards a design tool became available that could be used to explore previously uncharted territories. The analysis of sectional figures, surfaces and lines of force produced – and indeed absorbed – design energy. Parallel to the emergence of these possibilities the relationship between animation and the end product also altered. There developed a fundamentally different interplay between the model and the reality of the built structure, between the prototype and the production of a constructional detail, so that architectural form too acquired its legitimacy within an iterative process. Such new concepts of the (architectural) work and systems of legitimisation can be seen to emerge in, for example, the work of Foreign Office Architects who, in designing Osanbashi Pier, have courted process aesthetics. What FOA thematically deal with is not so much the completed product as the steps leading to its genesis: they describe Osanbashi Pier not as an object but as a material “manipulated” by a force field.<sup>4</sup> The public space of the terminal develops into a continuous surface, its folds giving spatial expression to the transfer of loads and movement diagrams. In a way that resembles Parent's designs where a destabilisation of the definition of architecture takes place that also affects the instruments used to depict space. A tomography of sectional figures and sequences replaces plans and elevations as the most important level of expression.

A new politics of space

Setting architectural systems of order in a state of motion is also a principal concern evident in the texts published by Claude Parent and Paul Virilio in the nine issues of *Architecture Principe*. The selection on pages 20 to 29 conveys an overview augmented by exemplary concepts and designs. These experimental settings for new spatial experiences document the fact that *Fonction oblique* was a kind of genetic code which Parent and Virilio hoped would establish fundamentally new relationships between housing, city, infrastructure and territory.<sup>5</sup>

Parent's programmatic issues as an architect



also indicated how a broader understanding of the concept of the work and the discovery of new techniques of spatial representation take effect conceptually. His concepts examined changing situations and scales whereby the difference between spatial installation, stage set, villa, supermarket and urban landscape appears at times to play no role. After Parent became a consultant to state energy authority EDF in 1974 he extended his examinations to the architectural and landscaping design of nuclear power stations which brought him the reputation of being a formalist. In fact Parent also conceived his visionary urban landscapes without concretely dealing with the question of power whereas prefabrication, a mandatory agenda in the sixties, is only touched on.<sup>6</sup> As regards the capabilities of the building industry and in political or social terms the preconditions for realising urban projects such as "Les Vagues" or "La Colline" simply did not exist. But nothing would be more incorrect than to view *Fonction oblique* solely as a pretext for expressly articulated concrete landscapes. Instead, this design of a new phenomenology of space must be evaluated as a critique of institutionalised planning practice. The Messianic drive to achieve structural density is not only a response to the failures of post-war urban development but also a polemical rejection of conventional professional practice.

Numerous projects and texts presented in *Architecture Principe* criticise dysfunctional planning models against the backdrop of contemporary consumer society. The range of zoning and planning instruments available was unable to provide an answer to massive increases in mobility and suburbanisation. On the contrary, the consumption and fragmentation of space due to the settlement scenario of the "Grands ensembles" is even legitimised by the separation of functions as anchored in CIAM doctrine. Parent and Virilio compared the conditions in the Paris suburbs with cities in the USA where, from the early sixties, racial unrest flared up. But as a designer Parent also turned against an avant-garde that attempted to compensate the deficiencies of the habitat by means of a policy of the "different" form: "An international and politicised architecture seeks in neo-realism the masochistic meaning of correct pauperism and the casual anecdote in order to ease its disturbed conscience. (...) A weary traditional architecture attempts a rejuvenation by adorning itself with the neo-decorative description 'Brutalism'. (...) A young American architecture, based in California, delights in the cult of the wooden shack and the pseudo-barn with a bizarre and picturesque roof".<sup>7</sup>

Questioning the relevance of the bulk of international architectural production – from the Smithsons to Charles Moore – Parent mainly criticises an architecture that positions itself by means of style and becomes a trivial item in the culture market. Like many other Utopians of late Modernism (Constant, Archigram, Hollein etc.) *Architecture Principe* combined its attacks on the situation of the profession with social criticism.

Thus the "consumer", who is generally indifferent to architectural products, should be shaken awake and his sensibility aroused by means of previously unknown spatial experiences. In the case of the individual this altered receptiveness for space creates – according to the rhetoric of Parent's programmatic text "Le Potentialisme" – the preconditions for a different attitude towards density and mobility. The application of new spatial practices is, so to speak, an "educational" challenge for which the basis must first be established.

According to Virilio in the area of housing the departure from the Taylorist standardisation of space in Functionalism should enable an emancipation from the "physiological" to the "locomotoric" body. In order to scientifically test the concept of the oblique Parent and Virilio conceived experimental designs such as the "Instablateur pendulaire" (p. 22). This project was to take place ten meters above the ground in a double monad in which Parent and Virilio were to stay for trial "habiter à l'oblique". This experiment in living, to be observed by sociologists, was planned for the faculty in Nanterre, of all places, and would have taken place in the university campus had it not been for the student unrest of May 1968. Instead this "Big Brother" act was overtaken by a different social reality that initially evaluated all behaviourist studies as reactionary and also initiated the end of the collaboration between Parent and Virilio.

Following the break-up of *Architecture Principe* in 1969 Parent was to continue the development of the *Fonction oblique* alone. In the early seventies he sent the "Practicable" on a tour of various French towns to directly animate citizens in urban space by means of dynamic spatial experiences (p. 23). After the premature demise of *Architecture Principe* as a theoretical platform, a wooden platform thus became the reality of the *Fonction oblique*. Around this spatial installation podium discussions, exhibitions and happenings, also including performances by the architect's sister, took place: The dancer Nicole Parent demonstrated the qualities of the inclined ground by her performances on the *Practicable* as well as her publication "Un sol à travailler: l'oblique. Une gymnastique à vivre: l'inclinaison". Thus in the decade of participatory experiments and events the incline was, quite literally, embodied. Yet these mobile actions with their vitality reminiscent of Adolph Appia represent less of a provocation than would have been the case before 1968.

#### Event, body, city

Using sensations such as "euphorie, vertige, claustrophobie, dépoliarisation, fatigue" Parent demanded physical effort from the subject who, he suggested, should conquer the oblique spatial continuum as one conquers a landscape, instead of being conditioned by architecture. The project for the cultural centre at Charleville offered a concrete opportunity for such an expansion of consciousness in 1966, Parent and Virilio shap-

ing its inclined roof as an interface (p. 28). Above a river the cross-section developed into an "obstacle surmontable" in which the incline and the interlocking produced experiences such as feelings of imbalance and destabilisation. The circulatory public space provided by the *Fonction oblique* was intended to "mobilise" for new collective experiences whereby the stage-like outdoor space and the direct approach from the water were not without a certain theatrical pathos. Institutionalisation and aestheticisation of the mass gathering in view of daily street protests? Virilio was later to deal again thematically with the dynamics of the political demonstration as a formative force in history in "*Vitesse et politique*".<sup>8</sup>

Elements of informal (urban) spatial experience and subversion are already to be found and subversion in the late fifties "dérive" when Guy Debord sent flâneurs through urban landscapes. The intention was that, by experiencing frenzied conditions of urbanity, these individuals would both explore and undermine consumer culture. To this end Situationism deployed a new urban cartography in which – as in the *Fonction oblique* – resting space and the flow of movement mingle. Certainly, with their idea of a literally physiological understanding of architectural environments, Parent and Virilio lie closer to classic modern body education than to the atmospheric and informal "psychogeography" of the Situationists. Although the programme of *Architecture Principe* examines a definition of space that is event-related and opposes conventional notation of space, it still takes as its starting point the implementation of *architectural* means. It is this "conservatism" that distinguishes the contribution of Parent and Virilio from other radical contemporary positions: Archigram, or later Superstudio, employed narrative techniques of irony or sampling, formulating their position through idioms of popular culture. Indeed, Parent and Virilio do not address the challenge of space by media and technology, their concept of a destabilisation of architecture being developed from the inside outwards.

The new organisation of the relationship city-architecture-landscape proposed in the urban manifestos burdens the architectural project with an "epochal" responsibility. The Nietzschean ambition behind this spatial concept is inconceivable without Virilio's investigation of military infrastructures.<sup>9</sup> The knowledge of power and territorial networks that Virilio had acquired from his study of the "Atlantikwall" in the late fifties was directly reprocessed in the design for the "Bunker" of Sainte Bernadette in Nevers. There is also a military quality at the roots of the continuous architectural topologies with which Parent and Virilio wished to solve the urban question. Hence in the *Fonction oblique* one can see – also – a criticism of the "humanitarian" ethos of modernism whose myth of progress had been exhausted in European post-war reconstruction.<sup>10</sup>

*Fonction oblique* was destined as a hardware to invest "exhausted" space with a new degree of material quality and performativity. Looking back



at the historical context of this politics of experience in 1996, Virilio claims: "At the end of the sixties, precisely at the point when the revolution of telematic communication techniques began and the spatial unity of the urban stage – public space – started to be replaced by the temporal unity of the domestic screen – the public image – when, with the delocalisation of post-industrial activities real time was already more significant than the real space of the human location, this return to the body was, in fact, highly relevant but it was, regrettably, thirty years too early!"<sup>11</sup>

Footnotes: See German text p. 17/19  
Excerpts from Parent's and Virilio's *Architecture Principe* manifestos appear on pages 4–5 and 20–29. See [www.werk-bauenundwohnen.ch](http://www.werk-bauenundwohnen.ch) for the unabridged French versions

Andreas Ruby (pages 39–45)  
English Translation: Rory O'Donovan

## Informed surfaces

Continuity: a narrative of the nineties

The last decade was witness to fundamental changes in the relationship between architecture, information and context. Animation and atmosphere emerged in place of function and symbol. The architectural object appeared to liquefy in the flood of data on the animated infrastructure, the city seeming to be absorbed entirely in continuous dispositives. Like during the final phase of modernism, scenarios of communication and networking experienced a boom. The question is whether the social and economic upheavals caused by globalisation will allow a critical focussing of the notion of space similar to Claude Parent's and Paul Virilio's "Fonction oblique" in the sixties. In the following contribution two developments are discussed: Andreas Ruby describes how, since 1990, the design scenario of continuity has, once more, been pursued across a broad front. At the same time he looks for contents and programmes that today can still be conveyed through radical iconographies.

The 1990s was, without a doubt, the decade of continuity. The Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 led to the collapse of the socialist system and ended the East-West confrontation of the Cold War. History had thus arrived at its goal, announced the American historian and presidential advisor, Fujiyama in 1990: Pax Americana for all. The contours of the old world with its order of sovereign nation-states gradually dissolved in the smooth space of trans-national capitalism. The spread of Internet, cable and satellite television as well as mobile telecommunications transformed the world into a continuum of space and time that had previously never existed and which guaranteed the permanent mobility of information and capital. Thanks to the transfer of capital in real time and the favourable difference in local time between the most important stock exchanges,

London, New York and Tokyo, this also allowed uninterrupted 24-hour trading in stocks.

Against the background of economic, technical and political globalisation a look back reveals clearly that continuity became the guiding paradigm in architecture of the 1990s. Following the well-worn rituals of "dif-, dis- and de-" that had characterised the *ancien regime* of Postmodernism and Deconstructivism, with the theme of continuity architecture seemed to have unlocked a completely new area. But a thorough differentiated investigation of this theme's architectural potential was never carried out. A concerted wave of theory propaganda by the Anglo-American Ivy League discourse proclaimed the geometry of continuous surfaces to be the sole legitimate architectural embodiment of continuity.

In retrospect the results of this media campaign are revealed as a Pyrrhic victory. Following years of a constant feverish search for new forms that, it must be admitted, decisively expanded the existing boundaries of what is spatially imaginable, at this stage certain signs of fatigue have become evident. The more closely architecture schools followed the proclaimed floor-wall-ceiling karma, the more predictable the results. The reasons for this premature entropy could lie in the monoculture with which the computer-supported avant-garde of the 1990s formalised the concept of continuity, in the process pushing more conceptually based interpretations of continuity onto the sidelines. To recall such interpretations here and in particular to note again their often very different motivations could assist in alleviating the term's discursive impoverishment.

### Architecture as continuation of the city

The concept of continuity was essentially placed on the map by Rem Koolhaas, who analysed the term infrastructure at the beginning of the 1990s. Koolhaas viewed infrastructure as a chance to unlock architecture and urban planning from their categorical isolation and to interlock them operatively. If seen as a section of an urban infrastructure architecture could lay claim to a new form of urban performativity. In his *Kunsthal* (Rotterdam 1992) this viewpoint led to a double programming of the architecture as museum and urban interchange between museum park and highway. The connection is provided by a pedestrian ramp that crosses the building in the form of a public passage, at the same time providing the model for its circulation.

In this respect the Kunsthal not only goes a step further than a polemical adaptation of a Miesian museum box, it is also more than a reworking of Corbusier's *promenade architecturale*: the continuous sequence of spaces that interpret circulation area as floor space and vice-versa is a direct appropriation of the *fonction oblique* by Claude Parent and Paul Virilio. Using this same method in his *Urban Design Forum* (Yokohama 1992) Koolhaas designed an infrastructural landscape. This urban project combines a diversity of (building) programmes together on a "warped plane" and choreographs

them to create a 24-hour cycle of events. In both cases the issue is fracturing the mono-functionalism of a typology and achieving a programmatic recharging by incorporating what is happening in the surroundings.

In the *Bibliothèques de Jussieu* (Paris, 1993) Koolhaas finally takes this ambition to extremes by trans-programming the building into an incubator of public space. The street space of the boulevard is continued inside the building in the form of a continuous landscape made of folded surfaces giving rise to a *boulevard intérieur* with a length of 1.5 km that winds its way up the interior. Although the project became famous as the first utilization of topological geometry to spatially organise an interior, the use that Koolhaas makes of the new form is essentially strategically rationalised: his intent is to give public space, that in the city is increasingly under growing pressure from privatisation, a new place. The superordinate function of the continuous surface essentially consists of ensuring that this new public realm does not become a monadic reserve but remains connected to the existing city, which it can then retroactively influence.

### Infrastructural versus programmed continuity

The definition of the continuous surface as a catalyst of urban coherence was further developed from the mid 90s onwards by two practices in particular: FOA and MVRDV, whose architects had previously worked for OMA and, at least in part, directly collaborated in the projects mentioned above.

FOA took a predominantly formal direction, crossing the topological geometry of Jussieu with the infrastructural logic of the OMA project for Yokohama and transforming the building typologically into an infrastructural landscape. By means of this conceptual hybridisation FOA eliminated the typological contradictions still noticeable in both Koolhaas projects. FOA's approach would cause the buildings, which in OMA's Yokohama scheme are still understood as separate entities, to ultimately melt together with their "warped plane" and the folded "floorscape" of Jussieu to hatch, so to speak, out of its glass box.

The folded surface, which for Koolhaas is still one strategic dispositive among others, becomes in the work of FOA an inclusive infra-structure in which all individual elements are abolished – as a consequence replacing collage as a technique by morphing. As well as in their epochal *Osanbashi Pier* (Yokohama, competition 1995, built between 2000 and 2002) this tendency is also illustrated, perhaps even more clearly, in their later design for a *Virtual House* (1997). Instead of being enclosed by the surfaces of a volume and thus localised, space drifts across a surface that in unceasing coils and turnings gives birth to a flowing structure. Hence the undulating endlessness of the Möbius band, that forms the spatial basis for this design, describes the essential meaning of continuity for FOA.

MVRDV in contrast abandons the topological principle seen in Jussieu – the upward morphed



corner of the Villa VPRO in Hilversum being little more than a postcard greeting to Koolhaas from his former collaborators Winy Maas and Jacob van Rijs – in order to decisively develop the paradigms of continuity in a programmatic direction. To do this they cross Koolhaas' skyscraper theory from "Delirious New York" with the idealised continuity from Superstudio's *Monumento Continuo*. MVRDV swivel the horizontal scalelessness of the latter into the vertical in order to develop further the principle of the skyscraper – urban diversity resulting from the stacking of very different programmes – but in the form of layered civilisation plateaus (whereby, interestingly, the dystopian cultural criticism inherent in the work of Superstudio loses any kind of ambivalence and is instead re-minted in the form of a renewed euphoric delight in progress). Whereas MVRDV's *Dutch Pavilion* at the Expo 2000 reduced this programme to the level of a PR-compatible discourse icon with a broad popular appeal, the full extent of its implications is revealed in speculative research projects such as *Meta-City Data-Town* (1998) and *3-D-City* (2000). Particularly in the latter project continuity means, above all, an increase in the density of the post-suburban carpet development, which itself represents the dominant urban form of contemporary continuity, to create an autonomous mega-city for 1 million inhabitants in the form of a cube with edges 1 kilometre long.

This hyper-densification of urban society does, on the other hand, liberate landscape, which is gradually being eaten up by the latter, and declares it a continuous carpet of greenery between the mega city blocks. With its point blocks in flowing green space the scenario of 3-D city scales up Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse* to an immeasurable extent (thus indirectly repeating the late modernist polemic that led Claude Parent to design vertical dwelling landscapes of a utopian density). The methodical basis of MVRDV's density research can be seen, however, in the design instrument of datascape, which itself represents an individual, informal form of continuity. Datascape makes it possible to visualise the effects of legal regulations on the formation of the built environment, both the limits of what can be made as well as the extent of what is possible. Using this concentration of all regulations applicable to a specific place datascape transforms the real topography of the place into a collection of bits and bytes. This comprehensive materialisation introduces a new reading of context that replaces the somewhat historical and culturally oriented interpretation employed by Critical Regionalism.

**From motion continuity to object continuity**  
The materialisation of context was decisively advanced by Greg Lynn, who conducted his research from the mid 90s in the "Paperless Studio" at Columbia University. In confronting the traditional understanding of place as a static configuration of material Lynn's primary interest were the mobile forces that determine the effect

and behaviour of a given context. Instead of employing an aesthetic of permanence in a continuing attempt to counter the dynamic character resulting from the fluctuating appearance of our world, Lynn wanted to derive architecture directly from the variable ecology of reality.

To visualise the forces active at a place as parameters capable of generating a design Lynn developed special processes for "movement mapping" using animation software from the film industry. Data on vehicular traffic, pedestrian flow, wind movement, the course of the sun, the amount of rainfall etc. were synthesized in the computer in order to form a dynamic system. To win a finite, buildable form from the resulting animation Lynn distilled out of the ceaselessly fluctuating data bodies a series of "time sections" which when overlaid, allowed the production of a spatial structure. In the final product of the design this movement is still indirectly revealed in the plastic modulation of the form it has itself helped to shape. However this does not prevent architecture from falling back into precisely that object-like alienation towards its context from which it attempted to escape by siphoning off all the latter's dynamic information.

Significantly enough Lynn moved the focal point of his work after the first realisation of this architecture – the *Korean Presbyterian Church* (Queens, NY 1999) – executed together with Michael McInturf and Doug Garofalo – showed that the conventional building industry was unable to meet the challenge of producing freeform surfaces. He turned away from pure design research and left Columbia University for UCLA where he investigated contemporary production processes for mass customisation used in the world of industrial design and their possible application in architecture. This change in direction is reminiscent of the history of the *Case Study Houses* whose architects such as Pierre Koenig or Albert Frey used the Californian (war) industry infrastructure as a suitable laboratory for the development of new construction processes.

The first project that resulted from this new research, which Lynn continued at the ETH in Zurich until 2002, is the *Embryological Housing* (1998–2000). The significance that the generation of form had played up to this point is here entirely transferred to the form's manufacturability. This is matched by a new definition of continuity: instead of incorporation in the force field of the surroundings Lynn is now concerned with the continuity of the built form itself. Thus the casing of the shell-shaped house consists of 2048 individual curved panels that differ one from the other in size and form but together produce a single complete form. This topological modularity makes it possible to give every house an individual form which can be satisfactorily built by employing the most modern production technologies such as robotic computer-controlled milling and high pressure water jet cutting machinery. In view of the rather bitter disappointment that resulted from the building of the Korean Presbyterian Church this radical turn towards "manufac-

turing research" is all too consistent as only in this way can the canon of what it is technically possible to build be extended. The price of this re-orientation is, however, that architecture must remain silent on all other themes

#### Hyper-local continuity

Against the background of such a considerable deficiency it is revealing to examine the development of French architect François Roche and his office R&Sie... Initially Roche took up Lynn's renewal of design theory by means of the technology of animation with great enthusiasm. Yet in contrast to Lynn he saw the true potential of animation not in the generation of form but rather in its ability to cartographically depict the characteristic features of a real place and to employ them directly in its transformation. The results are exactly the opposite of each other: in Lynn's case the context is functionalised ultimately in order to generate the object through its information, consequently the context disappears to the same extent as the object takes shape. In the case of R&Sie... in contrast, the object disappears to the benefit of the context, leaving behind its emptied body at the latter's disposal. Instead of exploiting the situation to draw attention to itself as a kind of sculpture, architecture functions as framework for perception that lends place a more intense presence.

R&Sie... demonstrate how the object can be eliminated in their *Maison Barak* (Sommières, 2001). The metamorphosis undergone by the choice of materials between the design and construction phases is particularly revealing. Instead of placing the house as an object on the site, the original concept envisaged mounding the topography artificially in order to set the house in the earth niche thus created and to cover it by continuing the ground. However, in order to be able to build the house with a floor area of 180 square meters while remaining within the minimum budget of just 150 000 Euro R&Sie... later decided to replace the topological morphing of site by a more conceptual kind of assimilation. To this end the continuous volume was replaced by a recumbent concrete cube and a tent construction of aluminium leaning against it. Through its soft form that emphatically traces the change in level of the downward sloping site the tent-house makes the rigid geometry of the box-house into a kind of landscape. The fact that both elements are completely wrapped in a skin of green polyurethane foil finally eliminates their volumetric contradictions and brings about their phenomenological dissolution within the vegetative texture of the surroundings. Because the integrity of the object is achieved through the use of a textile, living under this skin can develop a continuity between inside (box-house) and outside (tent-house) that would not have been possible in the originally planned house-earth-morph. This revision necessitated by economic constraints has therefore not reduced the house's potential for continuity but multiplied it.



The Dionysian delight of architecture in the material incorporation of the site interestingly stretches to include its semantic and programmatic dimensions. The work with philosophical, political and historic systems of symbols, that increasingly became taboo from the mid 90s

The dissolution of boundaries as an answer to global zoning?  
The hyper-textual linking of physical, semantic and programmatic levels of the project relieves place of its traditional limitations and releases it

into a unique, rhizome-like expansion. In the same decade in which architectural research formulated this new continuity as its contemporary paradigm political reality has interestingly developed in precisely the opposite direction: instead of disappearing into the depths of history the Iron Curtain has simply been drawn around a larger Europe that is determined to keep out the constantly growing stream of migrants from the so-called developing countries. Imperiously determined Axes of Evil force the formation of geopolitical camps and encourage xenophobia while the shortsighted lobby politics of the industrialised countries consistently prevents an effective fight against the impending global climatic catastrophe. Given the increasing zoning and parcelling up of a world that is further removed from McLuhan's global village than ever, the arguments for architectural continuity discussed here acquire an unexpected Utopian dimension that, in a manner anything but euphoric, recalls the desolation of the 60s Utopists, above all Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, when, following the failure of May 1968, they found themselves again in the disillusioned reality of the 70s holding a model of a future in their hands that nobody any longer wanted to have.