2

theoretical discourse

"Mobility requires paths, or roads, or airlines, or global digital highways. Modality is not a free-for-all; it is guided by networks etched onto the ground, by air corridors, by frequencies, by maps by itenararies, even by parking restriction. Then, not least every journey includes stops in places continuity requires discontinuity."

[GAME 1991_ IN THRIFT 1996:77]

URBAN UTILITY PORTAL

We live in an epoch of increasing speed and immediacy. Within this emergent mobile habitude, electronic media facilitate the fluid interface with formal built, transport and telecommunication infrastructures. Emergent evidences of fragmented ground surface spatial migration reveal the existence of social disconnections and tension between our mobile habitude and the urban fabric. Perceptible transparencies in social affiliation reveal anonymity that constitutes spatial dislocations. Indications of collective predilection suggest occurrence of innovative typology in architecture that consent to the potential of meaningful interaction with space, information, infrastructure and dialogue.

FIG 12: Boundaries on University Road

FIG 13: Urban barrier, UNISA wall

2.1.1 PHYSICAL: *"Modern high- and low-rise housing has in common that they innovate fundamentally in spatial organization, and both produce, in common it seems, lifeless and deserted environments."* [HILLIER_1984:x]

Mobile migration embodies high frequency momentum and movement. Continuous assimilation of electronic and physical infrastructures engenders probable migratory performance. Infrastructure networks necessary to support the progression of technologies result in unfortunate fragmentation in the urban fabric. Incoherent responsibility of urban planning, engineering, and design creates awkward spatial dialogues in the urban territory.

"Urbanism, as it is understood by today's professional planners, is reduced to the practical study of housing and traffic as isolated problems. The total lack of alternatives involving play in the organization of social life prevents urbanism from attaining the level of creation, and the gloomy and sterile appearance of most modern neighbourhoods is a shameful reminder of this." [HILLIER_1984:xi]

A disconnection lies in the development of the built environment and the supportive transport and information-telecommunication infrastructures, e.g. railways; highways, roads, fibre optic resources, and public parks. Derelict spaces are neglected spaces: the remainder of fragmented urban development of a capitalist driven society.

"For of course the most significant features of capitalism are its indifference to the particularity and individuality of and between its elements." [THRIFT_1996:86]

Segregated ownership and development of the urban fabric means that uncomfortable deserted spaces are more often experienced as impairing boundaries, visually, mentally or physically.

2.1.2 SPATIAL: Stipulate efficiency of mobile activities constitute discarding substances of idle usage, encouraging seamless acceleration in hyperspace. In the experience of urban ground-surface-migration spatial tension is aggravated at the cross roads with neglected borderlands. These transition spaces are experienced as irritated disjunctions. The urban fabric evolves slowly; struggling to accommodate the emergent demands of a mobile society. Archaic public ground surface infrastructure lack informative resources necessary to support our itinerant society. Spatially splintered from the obsolete urban fabric our isolated existence dampens further social affiliation.

"Whether or not we know who owns what seems to be public space, there is this idea that a particular sphere exists which is public domain. This sphere is indispensable in creating society, and therefore should be evaluated with a view to what quality of interaction it fosters, and how accessible that interaction is to the members of the society it creates and supports. Living in society has always been an essential part of humanity. The kind of society we live in is shaped by the way we interact with other members of society--how do we form our perceptions about other groups, other individuals? Public space serves as one place where groups and individuals come together, and the key issues of who has access to public space and what kind of interaction is fostered by it are issues important to the discussion of what kind of society we hope to live in."

[DALKE_1999:WWW.SPARKONLINE.COM]

FIG 14: Sidewalk as a kind of space community's socialisation.

Present-day urbanism's main problem is ensuring the smooth circulation of a rapidly increasing number of motor vehicles. A future urbanism will undoubtedly apply itself to no less utilitarian projects, but in the rather different context of psycho-geographical possibilities. [HILLIER_1984:68]

Transition spaces are diverse conglomerates of age, cultures, typologies, influences, habits, and fluctuating routines, this suggests that the transition spaces are the most vital elements of the contemporary city. Urban theorist Manuel Castells, describes, the contemporary city as networks of information, exchange, physical and virtual movement and flow. Transit nodes, parking lots and sidewalks are the most used public spaces in the city, yet they are primarily designed for efficiency and they lack the basic public amenities.

FIG 15: Diversity; Grand central station.

FIG 16: Diversity; sidewalk China Town. New York.

The Situationists' psycho-geography tries to find specific impacts of the geographical environment on the emotions and behaviour of individuals. Their goal was to establish the bases for an experimental life where people can come together to create their own lives. As Constant himself pointed out that the Situationists' conception of urbanism is social. Like Henry Lefebvre, Constant saw spatiality as the expression of social relations. In New Babylon, social space is social spatiality. Space as a psychic dimension (abstract space) cannot be separated from the space of action (concrete space). His utopian architecture supposes a new society.

"A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses. A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on space."

[LEFEBVRE_1991:40]

According to Constant a person's living quarter become less important to him due to his increasing mobility and his growing demand for temporary accommodation such as hotels, caravans and tents. He saw the future society bearer of nomadic culture. To him the needs of an emerging race of nomads must be satisfied.

[CONSTANT_1957 in THRIFT_1996:87]

FIG 17: Conceptual Diagram: global migration.

2.1.3 VIRTUAL: Technological advancement allows the fluidity of migratory travel; it accelerates the velocity at which we operate in hyperspace. Progressive performances of electronic technology spur the possibilities of continuous unification and mobile freedom between electronic and physical space. Migrating through the global electronic domain, a connection with electronic space is incessantly upheld, informing and orientating drift through physical space.

In contrast to the idyllic performance of electronic media, there is emerging evidence of spatial disconnections.

Technological electronic media detaches us from a tactile sensory experience of physical space. It suggests that our current dependence on electronic space disengages our relationships with the physical space. Although the electronic media, such as laptops, cell phones and i-pods, are grand technological advances, levelling the discomforting boundaries between electronic and physical migration, electronic media isolates us from our physical surroundings. In the physical urban domain interaction with space is via transactions, encounters and dialogues, while migration through hyperspace the boundary between physical and electronic space is distorted.

FIG 18: Virtual disconnections: Airport

2.2   *URBAN UTILITY PORTAL*

2.2.1 SETTING: Cities order locales of migration manifested through a hierarchical infiltration system of the urban field. An array of urban nodes is determined by their prevailing behaviour on global and local influence; transit hubs (airports), transit anchors (stations) and finally transient nodes are dispersed in the urban field.

Hyper-striated public spaces refer to territories within a city, exemplified by their sundry conglomerate and progressive tempo. It is these public spaces in which the isolative disconnections become evident. Eloquent transition is not equally evident on global and ground plain. Within the public realm of striated space, new habitude mutations hunt a fresh typology of spatial relation. The space should perform parallel in temprament and be programmed in occurrence to airport hubs.

"There is nothing new in choosing to see the work in a microscope rather than a telescope. So long as we accept that we are studying the same cosmos, the choice between microcosm and macrocosm is a matter of selecting the appropriate technique." [THRIFT_1996:77]

Global movement is aligned and navigated between cities as central points of transit. Within these cities airports are facilitators of express ground and global movement. Active cores nourish transit activities and systems of its immediate surrounding. Airports preserve a sense of dominance in the mobile domain, and also on ground level in the city's behavioural systems that operate around it. It is contextually embedded in the systemic fabric of a universal city. Airports feed systems on global and ground surface, and its own survival is reliant on these successive systems. Airport hubs manage flow, activities and intersections between the global and ground devices. Global and ground crossroads ensure the concentrated diversity that is a requisite in the endurance of transit hubs. Airports are self adaptive organic systems, which are elastic to the differentiation of activities and needs; visible and condensed in these nodes. Systems and spaces are intrinsically imbedded in the contextual nature of its global and ground envelopes, discarding redundant objects.

Emergent mobile performance emerges a predatory search for coincident mutation of transient hubs on ground surface. Spatial mediators that constitute grounding sense of place for urban migratory patterns.

Evidentially transit nodes fall within the global hierarchy of transport and transitory activities; it is an intimate unit within a systemic network embedded in the urban ground surface. Manifest as an influential transient point in global electronic networks, while simultaneously embedded in the intrinsic local fabric, systems and ground networks. Urban utility is an urban tool necessitated seamless spatial integration.
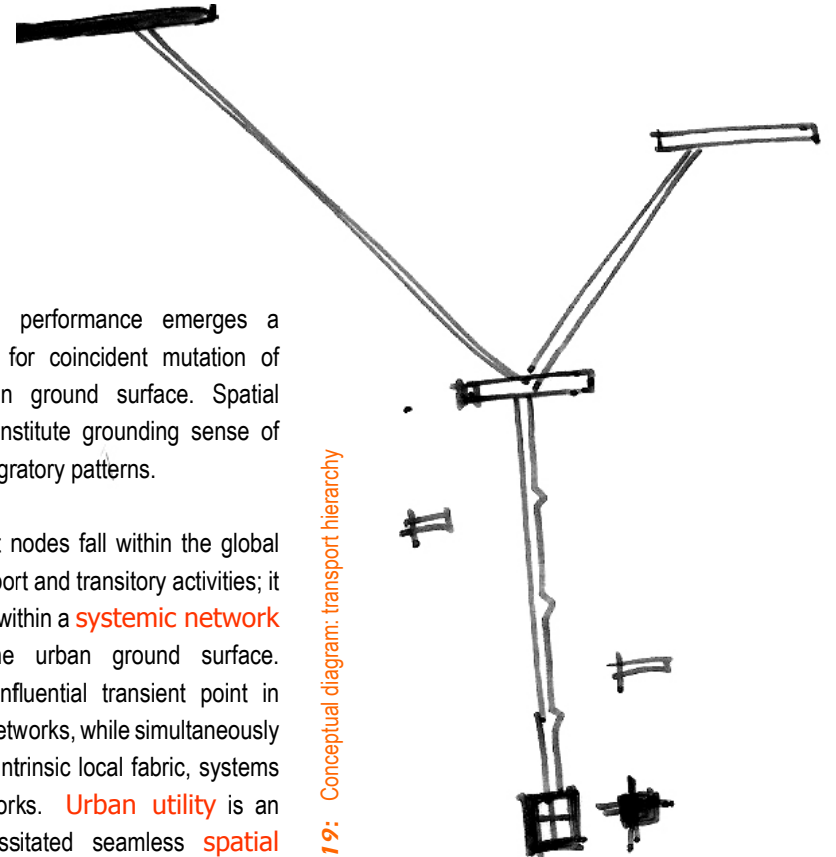

FIG 19: Conceptual diagram: transport hierarchy

2.2.2 BEHAVIOUR: Vibrant micro cosmoses exist at the intersecting fields where social migrating patterns traverse in the interstitial (usually neglected) terrains of urban context. It is here where unchallenged opportunities reside for innovative architecture that seals the fracture between the mobile social migration and a formal urban fabric.

"from spatial point of view, societies vary; it seems not only in the type of physical configuration, but also in the degree to which the ordering of space appears as a conspicuous dimension of culture." |

[HILLIER_1984:62]

Supportive ground surface infrastructure lie scattered in the urban land, like objects in an open field with no substantial spatial relation between themselves or their surroundings. Under closer analysis of supportive ground surface infrastructure it is revealed that they provide a perfect scale to mend the social-urban fragment. An infrastructure that is able to mutate rapidly to accommodate for the needs of a mobile society.

Urban utility portal [*u portal*] is a transient public space that exists on a multi-modal intersection on the borderlands of deserted spaces. Employing supporting ground-surface-infrastructure and information systems as a spatial catalyst that encourages possibilities of interaction with space, information and infrastructure.

"...social activity in any region takes place as a continuous discourse, rooted in a staggered series of shared material situations that constantly arise out of another in a dielectrically linked distribution of opportunity and constraint, presence and absence. A region is lived through, not in."

[THRIFT_1996:81]

FIG 20: Conceptual diagram: sidewalk speed and diversity.