THE TEMPORARY PRIVATE ZONE (TPZ)[1]
A new nomadic concept for urbanism

Abstract
The Temporary Private Zone (TPZ) is an attempt to examine the appearance of space in time.
It is an essay about the influence of informational media in organizing private zones, and about the effect of ´Virtual materials´ on their appearance.

The Temporary Private Zone (TPZ)
In a time of a constantly transitory surrounding, former valid qualities of architecture and urbanism, such as rigidity and solidity, begin to blur. A first - and maybe the most obvious - reaction is seeking for even more security and control to regain the stability we are about to loose.
By contrast, the Temporary Private Zone is offering a new nomadic concept for urbanism, mainly created by the cities actors themselves. It is dealing with the abandoned and leftover in the city and is promoting the instable as its main quality.
Put simply, the TPZ is offering three main design principles of a new way of using the city and navigating through it in a nomadic sense.

THREE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. THE EPHEMERAL

2. NEW TOOLS

3. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

1. The Ephemeral
The first principle of the TPZ is the Ephemeral.
What is really necessary? Is a building really necessary?
Can it be wholly or partially substituted by temporary interventions, virtual materials or by hiring the facilities for a short time?
The first principle of the Ephemeral is adapting existing building stock, left over places and transportation infra-structure. These places are often left over from the industrial era and can be changed them into usable places. This strategy occupies these places in order to give them a function, different from the original use.

WHAT IS REALLY NECESSARY?
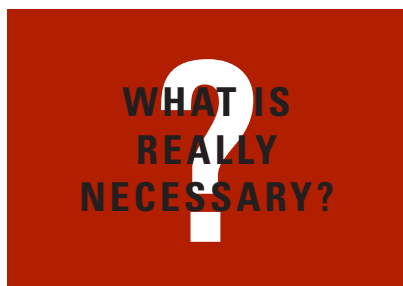
Transformation of places in time means looking for impermanent structures, which are able to achieve a maximum of performance with a minimum of required effort and expense. These structures have to be removable and light in weight. They are not built in the conventional way and posess no permanency. The TPZ is not fixed to a specific place or to a specific function.
It responds to the given conditions at that time and place and is therefore widely dispersed and distributed throughout the urban fabric. If the circumstances change it is able to move to another part of the city. The TPZ is also able to transform itself, adapting in its ephemeral structure over and over again to its new spatial and functional conditions. The Ephemeral, with its basic rules of mobility, adaptability and impermanence will change the profession of the urban planner and architect. In terms of periods of time for planning and realizing architecture, the common urban planning practice is quite unflexible and therefore inefficient. Planners are forced to deal with all aspects of a new ephemeral use of cities territory in order to find solutions for the cities complex and diverse structure. Transforming places in time is replacing the direct substitution of an old urban pattern by a new one. This can be seen as the first step in a move towards a more efficient planning practice. To pursue this effectively, urban planners and architects need a variety of new planning tools.

2. New Tools

With regard to the latest technology and its effect on the TPZ and urbanity, one has to distinguish between two types of new tools on the ´urban scale´ and the scale of ´architecture´.

On urban scale, new informational networks in combination with advanced digital devices are used to navigate and move in the city in different way. The emerging nomadic urbanism is a result of a complex interplay of mobility and these new informational networks, which are reinforcing each other.

On architectural scale spaces are created temporally by the activity of the city users. The use of ´virtual materials´, such as for example light and sound are completely changing the environment of places with different or no use in spaces of new activities.

DIGITAL INFORMATIONAL SYSTEMS
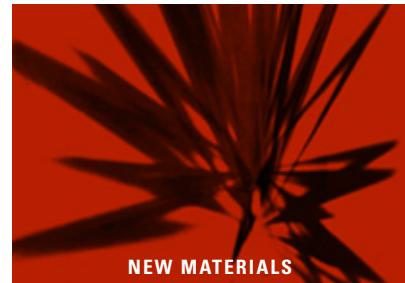
NEW MATERIALS

2.1 New Tools_New Materials

The appearance of many virtual places, like chat rooms, or shopping places on the Internet has created a continuing discussion about the increasing ´de-materialization´ of the physical environment. Almost unnoticed and masked by the fear of de-materialization, co-exists the counterpart of this fear, the ´re-materialization´ of physical places.

These places are mainly ´left-over´ places or residual places in the city. Bad Planning strategies, and also big infrastructures have created spaces, voids in the city, which are either no longer in use, not yet in use, have never been used, or are unusable in a conventional way. Thinking of them in the classical terminology of private and public places is to some extent impossible. They are quite often abandoned, and therefore the ownership is not clear any more, or they are state-owned but can not be described as being public in the usual sense of ´public places´.
These apparently useless places become the ground for unexpected activities.
They are stimulated through people's actions, and activated through ´virtual materials´ for a limited period of time. The created atmosphere, and therefore the sensual experience in space, plays an important role.
These ´virtual materials´ are creating new experiential spaces in the existing architectural context, completely wrapping up the human body in a sensitive surrounding, whereas the existing architecture seems to disappear.

The ´Temporary Private Zone´ uses the notion of ´space´, which is defined through people's activity in time and is therefore not necessarily built. It is for example the Raver who transforms a street into a dance floor. The programme or function is a variable factor, together with the materiality, the local, political and social circumstances and the informational technology.

$$S = P_{/t} \left(f_{/t},\ x_{/t},\ y_{/t},\ z_{/t} \right)$$

S = Space
P = Place
f = function, or people´s activity
x = virtual materials
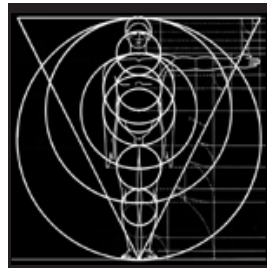y = found materials
z = local, political and social circumstances

´Re-materialisation´ means ´Re-activating´ physical place through people's activity and ´Virtual Materials´ in time.
"Our contemporary times have created a veritable cult of the body. From rituals of exercise on dieting to phobias of pollutants and cholesterol, we have developed elaborate purification rites, as if our bodies were under siege and our corporeal boundaries needed to be fortified against all transgressing invaders. Yet this cult of the body with its repetitive and compulsive rituals seems to be nothing short of a cover-up for a deep fear of disembodiment and immateriality." [2]
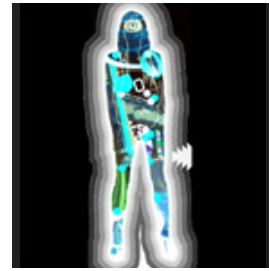
Taking the hypothesis of Christine Boyer in ´Cyber Cities´[3] as a starting point, and extending her argument in order to describe another kind of embodiment applying to physical places. This *"projection of the human body"*[4] on the built environment is activating inanimate objects or physical structures.
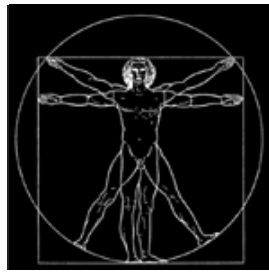
| the classical body/building analogy (Leonardo da Vinci, ´Vitruvian Man´) | the modernist functional analogy (Neufert) | attributing a sense of "aliveness" to inanimate bodies (Elaine Scarry, ´The body in pain´) |

Elaine Scarry describes in ´The Body in Pain´[5], three different ways of projections of the human body: firstly, the projection of specifiable body parts (for example, the classical body/building analogy); secondly, the identification of bodily capacities and needs within the object (the modernist "machine for living"); and thirdly, the attributing of a sense of "aliveness" to inanimate objects.
Scarry believes, that this third way of projection of the human body is the most accurate, *"to deprive the external world of the privilege of being inanimate"*.[6]

Paradoxically these ´left-over´ places, which are almost invisible as built environment and therefore not physical in their presence, are revitalized by means of ´virtual materials´.
New ´materiality´ or ´Virtual Materials´ used by the TPZ is essentially bound to the nature of the ephemeral appearance of the architecture. Adapting and transforming existing places is the first aspect of ´new materiality´.
For a limited period of time a place is transformed which can change the atmosphere and identity of the place completely. The best comparison is with scenery for film or theatre. ´Virtual materials´, such as light and sound, become new building materials. In their appearance, they seem to have no physical substance. Yet they require considerable technical equipment. Specialized personnel can assemble and dismantle all the necessary equipment in a very short period of time.
Many layers of all kind of materials are coming together and are interacting with each other. The relationship between the existing structure and the interplay of these virtual layers varies from a completely invisible structure to a strongly present physical structure with many nuances in between.

Creating and changing the ambience of existing places through virtual materials is an important instrument for the TPZ. These spatial interventions have a great effect on our sensual perception.
There is a major difference between using ´virtual materials´ in real ´physical places´, and simulating physical environment in ´virtual places´, with regard to the sensual perception. Whereas in ´virtual space´ the visual sense is being evoked, the experience in real places gets a third, the spatial dimension, and a fourth, the dimension of the moving body in the real place. The main advantage is the provocation of all our senses including the tactile one.
New electronic media, whose effects are simultaneously optic, haptic, and acoustic, constitute an enrichment of the experience in real places.

The ´Rematerialisation´ of ´places´ into ´spaces´ by people's activity and the usage of ´virtual materials´ can mean a transformation of the identity of the place.
Places with a very special identity can enjoy a second identity for a short period of time. This can be described as a ´schizophrenic moment´, in the sense that two identities coexist for a fleeting moment.

2.2 New Tools_ Navigation in the City
On the urban level, media works basically as organizational system: to give all kinds of information about what is happening (activities in the city), where, when, and how it is happening.
Different sorts of informational media are used to arrange the temporal usage of places in the ´urban zone´. There are broadcast media such as television and radio; printed media such as newspapers, magazines, posters and flyers and new digital media such as the Internet and e-mail. With regard to navigating through urbanity, new informational systems are becoming more and more important. These include the Internet and advanced digital devices such as palms, mobile phones or watches, sometimes even including highly specific navigation systems such as GPS.

The informational media for the TPZ is significant as an organizational system to spread and exchange information for organizing and guiding events.

There are two main distinct categories concerning the time in which the user receives the information:
´ADVANCE´ AND ´INSTANT´ INFORMATION.
´Advance´ information can be *´remote or local´* but also *´synchronous or asynchronous´*.[7] ´Instant´ information is mainly characterized through its distinctive feature of being synchronous. The local proximity is helpful but not absolutely necessary. New digital devices mean that the distinction between local and distant becomes less important.
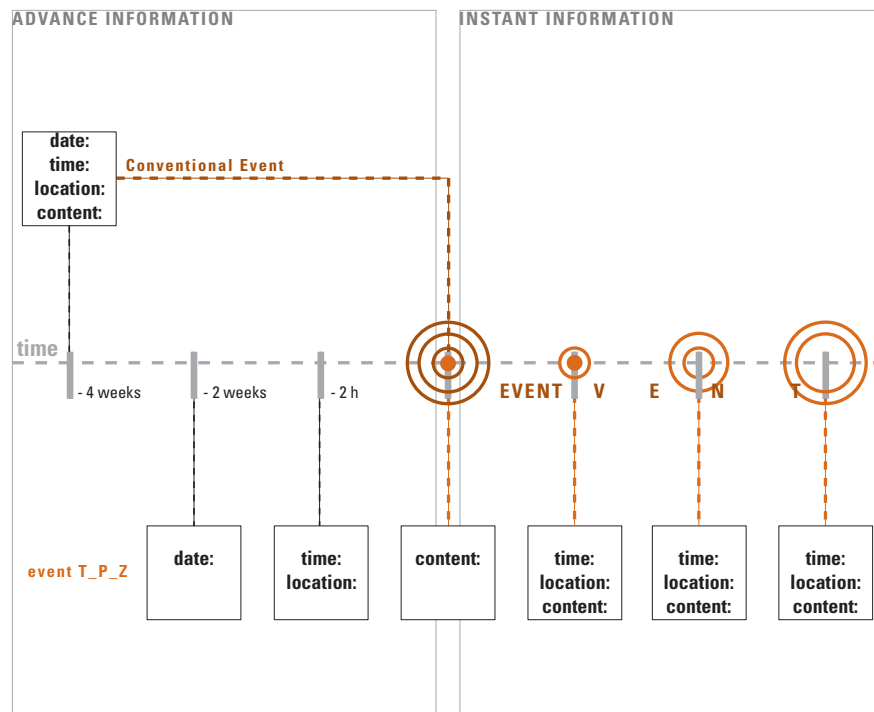
In contrast to a conventional event, like for example a classical concert in a concert hall, where you get all information like date, time, location and content weeks in advance, the ´advance´ information of the temporary activity is phased. Splitting the information in time, in place and in the medium used for transmitting, emphasizes the distribution of information as part of the event.
This strange interplay of stumbling across any information while ´drifting´ in the city or on the net, and the wish to discover something and explicitly searching for it, is used here to gain attention to the event itself.
At the same time it is used to incorporate the ´real´ or ´virtual flaneur´ in a strange game of time and ´space´, where the actors are not determined in advance and the story is not yet written.

The following formula describes this nomadic urbanism:

$$\text{The Temporary Private } \mathbf{Z} \text{one} = S_{/t_s}(m_{/t_m}, i_{/t_i})$$

S = Space
m = movement
i = information
t = time

The urban space (S), the movement (m), time (t) and the information (i) define the Temporary Private Zone (Z).
´Space´ (S) is characterized by physical place activated through people's activity in a certain limited time (t)
(The ´movement´ (m) can be the moving people changing place in the city, using public transportation, the car or walking. The movement is based on the time (t) necessary to bridge the physical distance.
The 'information' (i) as illustrated before is the message guiding the city users through urbanity; time being the most important tool. All three variables are connected to time, and in its variations they create the TPZ.

The media used to organize these temporary activities have to posess the same qualities as the activity itself. Examples of these are: Speed, Uncontrollability, Spatial Proximity and Availability.
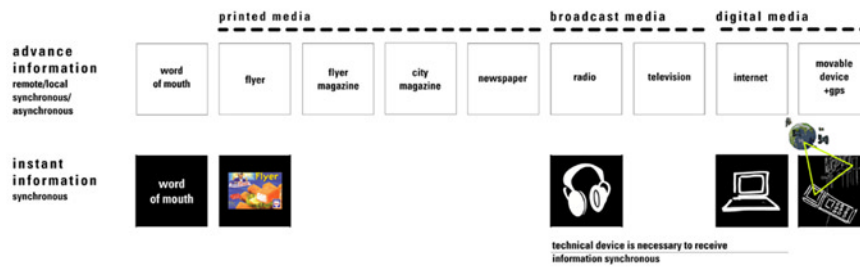
Different informational media is used to organize the temporary use of urbanity.
Broadcast media, like television and radio, are mainly used for ´advance´ information, but also here radio in combination with technical devices as a Walkman can serve as transmitter of ´instant´ information. Conventional printed media as newspapers and magazines are mainly applied to distribute ´advance´ information. The ´flyer´ is a special case of printed media used for instant information.
Digital media, like the Internet, has started to replace printed media as for example the flyer as an informational medium for the temporary usage of the ´city´. In combination with advanced digital devices it is the ideal medium for receiving and transmitting information in real time. New technological devices such as palms, mobile phones, all kinds of watches and other wearable and portable products, often including navigation systems such as GPS, become the technical devices to navigate through the city. Miniaturization and mobilization of technological devices enable people to become receiver and sender of information at the same time. What started with the mobile phone has become incredibly cheap, and therefore affordable for an increasing part of the urban population, and yet more and more complex in terms of its facilities. These complex digital objects are portable, or wearable, and became a visible part of the body. The relation of space and time gets another chapter.
"If 'place' starts to have significance within the mobile landscape, what does it mean to be located physically within it?" [8]

Digital informational systems, especially the Internet, can act as new planning platform for architecture and urbanism. The Internet is becoming an important infrastructure system to activate and reactivate urban patterns.
The Internet is horizontally organized and easily accessible. It is therefore the perfect medium to spread and exchange information in a quick and efficient manner. It is not bound to municipal rules or national orders and due to its quick and immediate accessibility of information; the controlling substance of cities or nations cannot easily stop it.
The TPZ has an actual location in time and a temporary but actual location in physical space. It has also a location on the Web, which is not actual but virtual, not immediate but instantaneous. It provides the logistical support for the TPZ and helps to bring it into being.
Using the Internet as planning device for urbanism means creating a platform, which is by nature open for everybody to interact. As new tool for urban planning the Internet calls into question the clear and predetermined separation between the planning body and the user.

3. Active Participation of the City User
The third design principle is the changing role of the city user from a disturbing factor to that of creative initiator.
The TPZ is seeking for more and real influence of the cities´ participant. For the TPZ the user is the main force to create this new urbanism. He is therefore not responding to pre-formulated and planned functions and his activities are using places in new and original way.
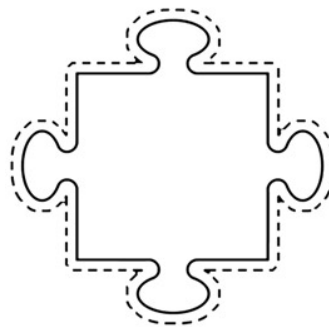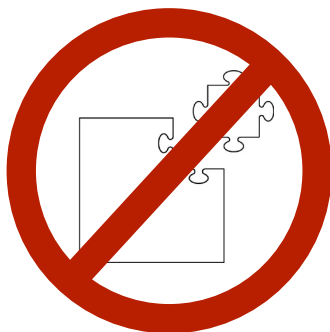
The user in the TPZ raises the questions, whereas in the traditional city he answers them.
Using places in new, unconventional ways is a strong contrast to the still common practice of pre formulated and deter-mined functionality of architecture and architectural places.

The TPZ affects the user on two levels:
Firstly at an architectural level: where the user is changing architectural place into space through his/her activity.
Secondly on a broader scale: where the ´actor´ is organising these new ways of activating urbanity. The new ´city user´ is planner and user at the same time. He is defining the function but also deciding where something can be happen. Digital communication networks, in combination with all kinds of technical devices, become the instruments for the ´city user´. Using electronic devices, as extensions of the body, the user is able to access informational networks everywhere and all the time.
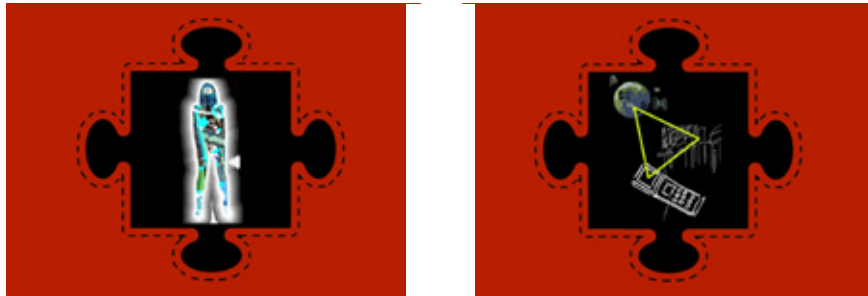
The Internet as organisational system is questioning the differentiation between planner and user, but also between commercial and non-commercial. These former valid distinctions lose their meanings. There are new categories, like successful and not successful, imaginative and unimaginative, flexible and non-flexible. And all these categories are part of the new economy of presence.
Like a product, architecture is produced when it is needed, not in advance. The TPZ is a specific answer to a particular request at a certain time. In its ephemeral structure it is flexible enough to react very precisely to a specific demand. The programmatic and spatial variety is a product of the user's imagination.
The architect's role is to trigger this creativity. The TPZ creates urban patterns that provide opportunities for social groups to intersect and overlap. Involving the user as force, the TPZ could be a model for re-socializing urban ground on a temporary basis. Providing organisational platforms for a temporary usage of urban places can be even seen as an interesting economic alternative.
The TPZ should be seen as a proposal for in-between conditions, when ´final´ decisions have not yet been taken. This in-between period is not an exception but can change our perception of urban planning and provide the opportunity for many different activities to intersect. Publicly owned urban places are an important resource, where decisions should not be taken easily and where the TPZ can offer a temporary alternative for a permanent privatization of our urban fabric.

Notes:
_1   Hakim Bey, The Temporary Autonomous Zone (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1985, 1991)
_2   Christine Boyer, CyberCities (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), p.74.
_3   Ibid
_4   Elaine Scarry, The Body in Pain (New York, Oxford University Press, 1985) quoted in Christine Boyer, CyberCities (New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) p.76.
_5   Ibid
_6   Ibid
_7   William J.Mitchell, E-Topia (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), pp.136-138.
_8   Fiona Raby, ´Flirting with mobility and a lightening up of the urban landscape´ (unpublished lecture, Conference: Doors of Perception 6, 2000, Amsterdam).