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Built as Rain. Film Analysis of Unbuildable Architectural Speculations – a Case Study of *Instant City* (dir. Peter Cook and Ron Herron, 1968) and *The Zero Theorem* (dir. Terry Gilliam, 2013)

Abstract

The introduction of time-based media into the design stage opened up a new understanding of architectural and represented space as a dematerialized, dynamic, and user-dependent concept. Unbuildable architectural projects always relied on specific techniques and media. Their radical nature usually channelled innovative artistic currents and visualization tools, like collage and pop art aesthetics in the works of Archigram. Cinema is yet another ground for such deliberations. With *Instant City* (Archigram's Peter Cook and Ron Herron) and *The Zero Theorem* (Terry Gilliam) the problem of dematerialization is being channelled by architectural/spatial proposals that involve a range of literary tropes, cultural texts, and filmic intertexts, in order to create a rich embroidery of references that forward a new look upon architectural production as a practice of creating protocols for dynamic and all the more elusive imagery. This article's central objective lies in the task of reframing a discussion on iconicity, media facades, and mutative building skins, so as to include modes of cinematic portrayal that are not just contents of architectural "messages", but also their "media".

When it is raining in Oxford Street the architecture is no more important than the rain, in fact the weather has probably more to do with the pulsation of the Living City at that given moment.[1] However, upon taking the turn from Oxford Street into Regent Street, we might find ourselves facing a starkly different setting, a dazzling display of vivid imagery at Piccadilly Circus. We may ask ourselves, 'where has all the architecture gone?' With that in mind, picture Piccadilly Circus, or Times Square, or the Shinjuku junction. Picture a post-socialist city, where art deco facades fight off a surge of neo historic buildings from around Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime, each blushing in its faded beauty; otherwise, they are generously covered up by scaffoldings, giant ads, and displays. As they linger on in this Christo-like gestation for weeks, months, and further on, the memory of buildings underneath becomes re-inscribed into the cityscape as accentuated absences. Urban space has already been colonized by commerce, reducing historical architecture to the role of coat hangers, treating the city as nothing short of an advertising platform.

Objectives

With the lingering image of glistening advertisements wrestling traditional building fronts, two texts of visual culture should be brought together here, as they came to recognize this trend independently as a primarily architectural conundrum. Each, in its own way, addresses the media facades paradigm, but – more importantly – each develops a critical response to the visual pollution of urban landscape, as well as to the progressive employment of electronic media in architecture. The first one is an unrealized architectural proposal that conveys a kinetic, transient, and inherently time-weary feel not just in its structure, but grounding its polemics in a 'critical essay' on technologically-driven urbanism. This is *Instant City* (1968-70) by Peter Cook and Ron Herron, architects mainly associated with the 1960s experimental group Archigram. Not merely a city of commerce, but city-as-commerce, habituating an educational agenda as well, although in a confusingly gaudy manner, like a platform for personalised visual ads. It's a kind of urbanity witnessed multiple times, for example in the harrowing verticality of *Blade Runner* (dir. Ridley Scott, 1982), or *Minority Report*'s (dir. Steven Spielberg, 2002)[2] intrusiveness into personal space.[3] This case, though, accommodates the language of novel forms emergent in the 1960s. Incorporating cutting-edge advances in cybernetics, it treats this discipline as a repository of patterns, models, but also because of its structural semblance. At the same time, an awareness of what is currently in vogue can be sensed here, like in the instances when *Archigram borrowed the incipient computer jargon to stress contrast between tangible, touchable objects, and the notion of systems that could be transmitted but not touched*.[4] The same would nowadays amount to no less than a network, a scheme of interconnections that trace a spatio-temporal plan of our online itineraries.

But while *Instant City* embarks on a positivist mission of picturing technological utopia[5] as a prototypical *smart city* 'frosting' on a small town 'cake', the second case study – Terry Gilliam's *The Zero Theorem* (2013) – gives Archigram's technological apologism a cynical twist, due to the prospected city's saturation with utterly commercial services, turning citizens into constant consumers – the more inert, the better. Such collation provides a double look on the issue of treating urban environments as merely an interface.

Unbuildable and unbuilt: defining (the) problem

Both cinema and "paper architecture" can be seen as platforms-in-themselves, prone to indulging in polemics on architectural discourse and urbanism, formulating speculations

on future forms and the potential application of specific solutions investigated these days. Taking that into consideration puts us in a position to reconsider the purpose of unbuilt projects, while distinguishing them from unbuildable ones, even though the terms are often seen as interchangeable. Nerma Cridge pinpoints this problem by considering 'true un-buildables' as thought experiments that don't necessarily resolve construction problems *per se*, but interrogate alternative modes of habitation, or defining architecture: [*t*]*he unbuildable remains external to the construction of the physical object and operates within the purely visual realm, but, importantly, it can and does remain architectural. ... The unbuildable and its forms of representation have the propensity to get 'caught up' between architecture and art, and more specifically, between architectural drawings and pictorial images*.[6]

Architectural discourse is always contextual and it involves representation techniques that strive to keep track of change and temporality. However, such dynamics is typically absent from plans and blueprints. Otherwise, as in Archigram's notational experiments and their further elaborations, it transforms the understanding of architecture as a discipline primarily concerned with static monuments.

An opportunity like this has been brought about by an alliance between buildings and technology, or technology and the city: *it is necessary to construct novel ways of seeing architectural and urban spaces that incorporate change, self-organization and time as enabling spatial qualities. Such practices require the recognizing and sensing of qualities of incrementality inherent in urban space, leading to a dynamic understanding of urban spaces*.[7] Additionally, this change has been propelled by yet another 20th-century agent – cinema. By populating films with unbuilt projects, which often serve as backdrops or philosophical references (utopian fictions), one is able to examine speculative architectural proposals in action – be they cyber-spaces, wearable environments, or intelligent houses – especially in terms of the ways in which they might affect us, considering how such impact would involve the emergence of new discourses on (urban) space and our role/place in it.

Parasites of visual culture

However, in the *Instant City* and *Zero Theorem* scenario, the 'things to come' take on forms of add-on architecture, an excrescence which Cook and Herron see as a symbiotic and temporary plug-in that is meant to give the historical town a metropolitan glare, whereas Gilliam's reserved standpoint classifies it as a parasite, voraciously obliterating concrete and stone from one's visual field, in favour of vibrant media facades seeking attention in the glance of those passing by. Created more than 40 years apart, the texts react to a specific architectural tendency, evidencing the facade's deepening emancipation from the building's body[8]. This emancipation – an engineering possibility – is turned by Venturi into a signifier of complexity and contradictiveness in classic architecture, making Robert Venturi compare the facades of Baroque churches[9] to present-day billboards. But first, Venturi takes note of how [*t*]*he concave facade in the Baroque church accommodates spatial needs that are specifically different on the inside and the outside. The concave exterior, at odds with the church's essential concave spatial function inside, acknowledges a contrasting exterior need for a spatial pause in the street. At the front of the building outside space is more important. Behind the facade the church was designated from the inside out, but in front it was designed from the outside in*.[10] In his argument, media facades express this disparity too, while replacing cathedral portals with a flickering screen – the new *Biblia pauperum*. No wonder that contemporary pilgrims (circa 1969) have found their 'neon bibles' in enormous add-ons to what has been termed in the Venturian dictionary a *shed*, beaconing them to casinos, motels, and strip joints.[11]

Iconicity + imageability

Visual ads, glittering media facades, not to mention billboards, are to be regarded as basic forms of communication. The *Instant City* and *The Zero Theorem*'s future London makes interesting comments on the contemporary drive towards *smart cities*, which – in theory of collating online and offline activity – suggests that we should treat the city as Manuel Castells urges us to. It can be regarded as a material interface or platform linking individual urbanites with the collective,[12] assuming that ...*our urban world is now both virtual and physical, and our analysis of both social and spatial network behaviors can help us design and measure the effectiveness of our plans as they relate to life in the urban space. The way we utilize space in our cities directly informs our social relationships.*[13] This way, we neither neglect what is intuitive for cyberspace, nor what we, the urban dwellers, have all become accustomed to regard as such, convincing public opinion, that [s]*mart cities essentially require augmenting a city's existing infrastructure with an advanced command and control network to control the flow of resources.*[14] This concurs with the opinion that [t]*he identity of any city today is as much composed of the media content shared in that city via social networks as of its infrastructure and economic activities.*[15] Indeed, Kevin Lynch's notion of *imageability*[16] becomes increasingly intermeshed with Instagram contents, just as it turned ambiguous when city skylines came to be advertised on postcards, television, and in cinema.

Contemporary architects can thus come to be iconic on the basis of *"paper architecture", which is typically unbuilt (even unbuildable), yet well-known through frequent reproduction in the architectural and popular media.*[17] Therefore, the city is more often encountered – and 'digested' – visually, via media – an imperative that propels both the *Instant City* and *The Zero Theorem.*

Enter Archigam

But if architecture is likely to be reduced to a graphic message, which has to fit the purpose of effectively conveying contents of its "speech bubble", then what exactly is this material residue that acts as a container for any kind of indoor activity, outweighed by its own ornament? Has the city too fallen victim to *black box* thinking, amplifying the role of interface and software, while diminishing structural 'hardware'? Such issues were addressed in the 20th century's post-war years, with numerous experimental architectural groups taking stage in the 1960s. And it was [a]*round the middle of the 1960s* [that] *Archigram expanded the concept of an architecture in transition to include a search for an 'architecture of absence'* [Robert Smithson's term], *following its dematerialisation thought he use of media … . Such visions were based on the confidence in a limitless availability of technological means and political structures, of information, time and space.*[18] Precisely this double look – first, conceiving architecture as a temporal shelter suited for nomads, something foldable and inflatable, and, moreover, something that provides infrastructure and flow of media, while dematerialising when necessary; and second, a marketable commodity: mass-produced, flooding the market, meeting consumer needs, just like vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, or television sets do – came to distinguish Archigram in the midst of brutalist deluge in the UK. At the same time it smuggled in radical ideas, more fit for communal nomadism, and either breaking away from the city as we know it, or transforming it into a configurable assembly kit with graphic design characteristic of the age of Swinging London.

Concepts that exhorted architects to abandon static, structural, and formal understandings of architecture to the benefit of mobile, transformative, and time-dependent per-

spectives on built environment, tell us that *embracing time in architecture means embracing change. That is, acknowledging that buildings are not fixed, static objects rooted to a single moment and impervious to change, but mutable subjects much affected by everyday use, intentional intervention and unavoidable material decay*.[19] Furthermore, Archigramers were in awe of the discipline's 'next of kin', that is the makeshift, vernacular constructions, technological gizmos, and temporary structures of either Universal Expositions or seaside provenance – from Brighton or Blackpool piers to Expo pavilions and geodesic domes.[20] Taking this thought a step further, from tents/marquees (Millennium Dome) we turn to carnival rides that were meant to animate any small town community through atmosphere-generation – manufacturing audio-visual displays that wouldn't seem out of place in George Dunning's *Yellow Submarine*: the *Audio-Visual Jukebox*, *Hologram Scene-Setter*, *Enviro-pill*. Each meant to enhance mundane experiences of typical city dwellers by introducing metropolitan-sized events/locales to cloistered communities, imposing it on them, if necessary, although never presented as a forceful invasion in the collages of Cook and Herron.

Archigram's paper polemics

Here, another 'face' of Archigram's endeavour should be commented upon, namely its reliance on image-based media. *Architecture as a vehicle of communications dramatically increased the reliance of the discipline on the visual domain outside of modern graphic strategies. Images of consumer culture were drawn upon to generate the atmosphere of transience and circulation, or even equate lifestyle and architecture. Architecture as a web of imagery implied that building was not of the essence after all. Representation was architecture in itself*.[21] Archigram's foremost means of communication was the *Archigram* magazine (short for "ARCHItectural telegram") – ten yearly issues in total (the last one was misleadingly tagged 9½), published in a style reminiscent of *Amazing/Astounding Stories* magazine.[22] While evidencing a *make-do*, inventive, and unapologetic attitude, it spawned a wide array of visionary projects, from floor plans to drawn-over collages – a lesson taken after the Peter and Alison Smithsons, as well as the group's first exhibition, *The Living City* of 1963, where visitors would be thrown into a swarm of visual documents, photographs, drawings, gathered from a variety of sources. Some of these visual materials came from 1950s science-fiction classics; others from microbiology. They were meant to give off a culturally diverse and interdisciplinary juxtaposition of potential forms as candidates for architectural morphogenesis. And so, fellow Metabolists' projects – Kiyonori Kikutake's *Marine City* (1958), or Kisho Kurokawa's *Helix City* (1961) 'recycled' organic forms (deriving from biology, the natural environment) as inspirations for their city-sized megastructures.[23] So did Archigramers (re)employ theories and concepts taken from cybernetics (i.e. circuit boards, signal processing schemes) as layouts or 'working manuals' for unbuildable speculations, e.g. Cook's *Plug-In City* (1964), Michael Webb's *Rent-a-Wall* (1966), Ron Herron's *Tuned Suburb* (1968), Herron and Cook's *Instant City*, yet, most of all, the Monte Carlo competition project, which literally hid architecture away under a tel.[24] The city was set to disappear, but before vanishing, it would leave an unfamiliar web of interconnections behind; a blueprint of circulation that is nearly an exact opposite of the *functionalist city* zoning paradigm,[25] while closely resembling cybernetic models 'cannibalized' for their flow efficiency.

Among prime examples of megastructures disintegrating into kits-of-parts is the *Instant City*, communicated by means of models and colourful collages, like this one, in a *typical night-time scene montage, 1968. Instant City entertainments roll around the clock for the brief period of its existence, images and text blown aloft by pneumatic tubes and dangled from bal-*

loons. Ambiguous perspectives, puzzling shapes, and "all-over" composition convey the vibrancy. In all, it is not the sort of scene normally associated with the political upheavals of 1968.[26] To follow this idea through, Instant City project comprised not just a collection of models, drawings, collages, and perspective renderings, but also a series of drawings revealing phases of the city's implementation – storyboards, of sorts, or technical manual illustrations.[27]

Instant City in phases

Instant City proposes the idea *of a 'traveling metropolis', a package that comes to a community, giving it a taste of the metropolitan dynamic – which is temporarily grafted on the local centre – and whilst the community is still recovering from the shock, uses this catalyst as the first stage of a national hook-up. A network of information – education – entertainment – play – and-know yourself facilities*.[28] Hence, it is a perfect enactment of the concept of the disappearing structure, additionally portraying an image-imbued urban space of unprecedented scale, which does not only base its premise around temporary event-structures (places, but conceived as a kind of garden *follies*), but itself acts like an intermediate urban layer. An evolving existence dependent on 'gestation' phases – a symbiont, or a parasite (it's for us to determine). This feature becomes emphasized in the description to the project, where expressions like *a mysterious creeping animal*, *leech truck*, or an itinerary of *bugging the whole town* stand out in the text. In this architectural happening's 'crescendo', the city is supposed to *dissolve … from the simple mechanics or hierarchies of 'structuring' and like-objects. Just as did the Plug-in City: it sow*[s] *the seeds of its own fragmentation into investigations of a gentler, more subtle environment tuning*.[29]

What exactly would have happened if we dialled Archigram's office back in 1968, ordering a 'single portion' of *Instant City* – the complete package? First, components would have been loaded on trucks, or carried to the destination by balloons, blimps, aircrafts. However, prior to their installation, the town ought to have been surveyed by a 'team of electricians', setting up a relay station, and accommodating the structures so they become media-event-friendly; this is an equivalent of assuring that USB ports are present. In the next stage, [t]*he 'City' arrives. It is assembled according to site and local characteristics. Not all components will necessarily be used. It may infiltrate into local buildings and streets, it may fragment*,[30] while subsequent unfoldings promise that an *overhead tent, inflatable windbreaks and other shelters are erected. Many units of the 'city' have their own tailored enclosure*.[31] After this, the 'city' *stays for a limited period*, before it *moves on to the next location*. In other words, Instant City inseminates local townships with a bundle of electronic gadgetry, which forms a chain of terminals for an urban network, establishing an agglomeration operated through electronics; decentralized, employing 'computing power' of the sum of local communication nods. Or, as Cook and Herron augured, [e]*ventually by this combination of physical and electronic, perceptual and programmatic events and the establishment of local display centers, a 'City' of communication might exist, the metropolis of the national network*.[32] The cybernetic paradigm(s) explored in the mid-1960s by Cedric Price (*Fun Palace*)[33] or Gordon Pask,[34] were heavily influenced by both – the study of intelligent artificial systems (Norbert Wiener) and grand military and university-based projects, like ARPANET – Internet's predecessor – coming into existence via a network of servers.

Translating this model into urban terms was, of course, a characteristic *modus operandi* of the post-war generation of tech-geeks; however, from today's vantage point, the fact that Instant City's model – especially the final stages of its implementation – so closely resembles Smart Cities,[35] nearly borders on the uncanny.[36] Cook and Herron intended the

structure to be much more than merely mobile. They wanted to tap this mobility into a pro-gramme of electronically transmitted attractions, increasing the city's ephemerality unto a manifested disappearance of architecture.

Disappearance of architecture

As soon as the programme is installed, the material 'flash drive' can be disposed of, this way acknowledging the fact that [t]*he most profound technologies are those that disappear. They weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it.*[37] Con-sidering that architecture-as-technology is supposed to vanish, whereas architecture-as-image ought to remain as an afterimage on the surface, 'conditioning our emotions' with environmental ambience, the future of our habitats is effectively working its way towards a fork in the road of, either: (a) radical individualism of personalized settings, or (b) com-mercial harassment under the guise of consumer presets. Contemporary times allow to have both, while abandoning even incremental ambitions for infotainment and educational implementation of the Instant City paradigm for the sake of product placement and adver-tising, as for among [o]*ne of Archigram's accomplishments had been to reorient architecture toward changing social and ideological patterns, recognizing that individualism and consumerism were the prevalent postwar European and American social movements.*[38]
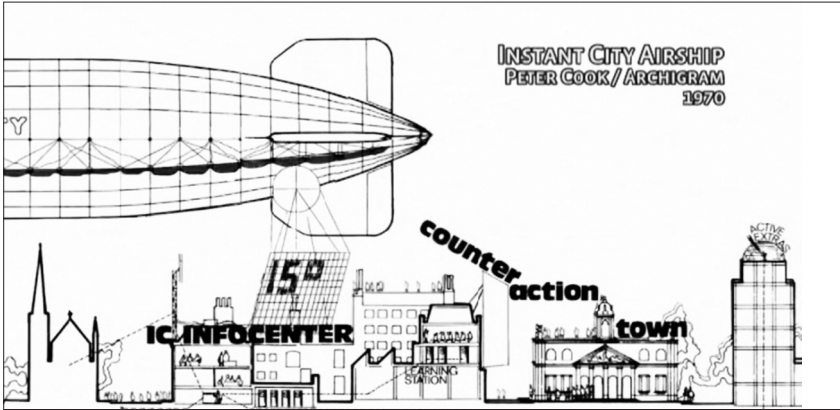
The Zero Theorem's commercial 'Strip'

However, Terry Gilliam's film turns this notion into a nightmarish vision of the 'city' preying on its citizens along alleys turned into miniature Las Vegas Strips, harassing them with a battery of flashing displays, personalized ads, newscasts mixed with commercials. At the same time, it is drawing their attention away from actual surroundings that deteri-orate beneath the generic Piccadilly Circus facades. Upon reviewing *The Zero Theorem* (2013), the critics eagerly pointed out the film's schematic dependence on Gilliam's previous affairs with science-fiction genre, principally in terms of their retro-futuristic, scrapyard landscapes of *Brazil* (1985) and *Twelve Monkeys* (1995).

Still, by treating his latest film as a final instalment in a trilogy of dystopias, we somehow miss the point when considering this director's *oeuvre* through the lens of a former *cutout animation* artist. This artist successfully made the transition into live action feature films, while retaining his creative approach, best described as assembling found objects – be they photographs, drawings, or literal objects – repositioning them in unexpected com-binations mostly to the viewer's awe and bemusement. Such 'uncanniness' becomes evident primarily in films whose premise is based on a suspension of disbelief, i.e. science fiction cinema.
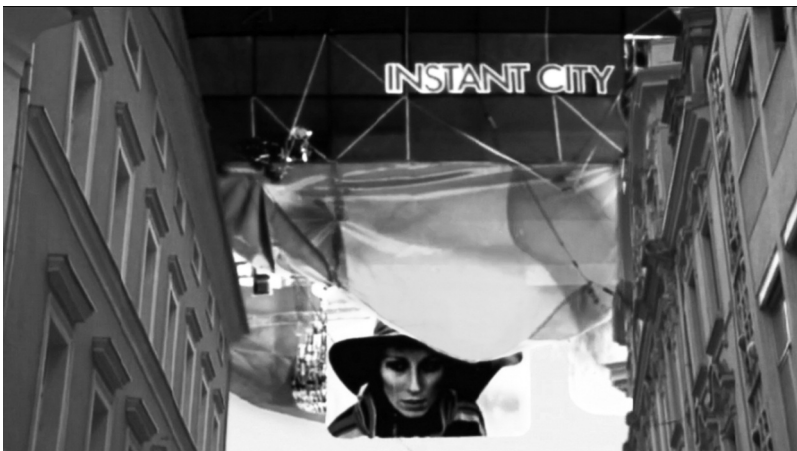
The settings of Gilliam's cinema

The architectural and urban settings in Gilliam's films are invariably anchored in art history, even when seeming to put forward a playful agenda. While *Brazil*'s *mise-en-scene* comprised ductways and pipes, cascading and coiling out of and around buildings, the post-apocalyptic Baltimore, together with its fellow Philadelphia of *Twelve Monkeys*, become witnesses to the inception of vast underground rat mazes, furnished with electric *bric-a-brac*, composed of lightweight and portable objects carried down to the sewers when the epidemic hit both cities, and the remnants of mankind barricaded themselves from the

Instant City blimp – still from *Great Expectations A Journey through the History of Visionary Architecture* (2007, dir. Jesper Wachtmeister)

Instant City in a Field – still from *Great Expectations: A Journey through the History of Visionary Architecture* (2007, dir. Jesper Wachtmeister)

Instant City in Graz - still from *Great Expectations A: Journey through the History of Visionary Architecture* (dir. Jesper Wachtmeister, 2007)

Stills from *The Zero Theorem* (dir. Terry Gilliam, 2013)

deadly virus. *Brazil* presented us with a dysfunctional city of circulatory systems put on view, as if to take note of every illogical flow of media and information being passed around without the citizens' exact knowledge of its content or purpose. *Twelve Monkeys*, on the other hand, evidenced a makeshift abode, sustained on the notion of a hidden city, in which the discrete infrastructure is really all there is.

In contrast, the London of *The Zero Theorem* – co-created by the production designer, David Warren – deliberately obscures its true shape, robed in colourful displays, billboards, and luminous signs, as if mocking the transformative logic of an 'Instant City' in its final stage, portraying Cook and Herron's 'add-on' as a surgery performed on the city, which had left the patient in bandages, clueless about the outcome of the operation.[39] By perverting the proposal's original intent, the city in *The Zero Theorem* is rendered neither 'smart' nor responsive, only strident. As with Gilliam's other dystopias, the transformative potential is exercised in purely symbolic terms, relating to the film's semantic layer by means of *set design* (and, also, art direction as such, due to heavy use of CGI for set extensions, digital mattes, touch-ups, and post-production work), *visual intertextuality* (which conjures up specific concepts, along with architectural and graphic objects [re]presented on screen), and by engaging in the same conversation as Cook and Herron did, focusing on a deepening reliance of architecture on techniques and media of visual representation.

Collage as technique (creating context through clashing)

Evoking his background as animator, but just as much the strategy of creating stark contrasts in juxtaposed imagery, the director touches upon a Surrealist understanding of collage. In his recent 'pre-posthumous memoir', Gilliam writes: [t]*he idea of taking images out of their original contexts was at the heart of what I was doing, and the new technique I'd hit on more or less by accident quickly began to generate its own momentum. … I'd find people in serious situations – soldiers in war-time, politicians on the campaign trail – and liberate them by putting them in a dress or making them do something ridiculous*.[40] The new context that is brought about by clashes of imagery, appears as instantly – if discretely – in debt of the original sources. While conjoining disparate objects into a seemingly united whole, the proverbial stitches manifest themselves wherever we become aware of the latent rhetoric in such imagery, because it is precisely the disparity between a 'picture book' and a 'cutout' that sparks our amusement, amazement, or aversion.

The same goes for Archigram's body of work created back in the 1960s, when [c]*ollage and photomontage were established modes of breaking normative sensibilities, and the … group consciously drew on these strategies for individual images as well as overall publication layout. By placing disjunctive imagery, no matter how banal its original context, in proximity, attention was drawn to the process of representation at work within the image and then to its overall fabrication*.[41] With pictures coming from comic books, archival photographs, and lifestyle magazines, the resultant collisions were indeed verging on the banal, given the futuristic, original look of Archigram's landscapes. As Jennifer A. E. Shields observes, this strategic use of collage technique as means to manipulate elements extracted from different sources, echoes Archigram's *kit-of-parts* tactics of assembling interchangeable modules, updating and expanding them at will, and/or reconfiguring them. In other words: *Archigram invented prefabricated architectural units that could be inserted into the existing context. These 'Popular Paks' offered the opportunity to fine-tune the built environment*.[42]

However, while the group's use of imagery may be oblivious to their exact source – i.e. the precise indexical and contextual placement – thus retaining only the trace of its pre-

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vious 'setting', be it pop culture, archival photography, or historical documentation, Gilliam's craft relies on their 'genealogy'. The transition to live action feature films didn't force the former Python to altogether abandon his distinctive technique, only to update it for visual cues and references spanning a wide array of disciplines, most prominently cinema, comic book history, and architecture. Architectural buildables and unbuildables just happened to be among the areas quite eagerly explored.

Sampled sources

The Zero Theorem sees many more cut-and-paste creations in the same vein, which – by a change of context – benefit and transform the original in a significant way, for example, recreating, in the first street scene, the famous *Soft Sell* project (1993) by Diller + Scofidio, a temporary installation at Times Square, New York, that used a large scale projection of a close-up on woman's lips, ushering the passers-by to invest their desires into shopping spree. In a lengthy sequence portraying the protagonist, an agoraphobe and a recluse Qohen Leth hurries off to work, bursting through a rush of personalized ads and billboards, installed on the buildings' fronts, one of which is a *Soft Sell* carbon copy.

Perhaps it isn't accidental that this corridor of light attracting his sight from the ruin beneath the displays is yet another voice in a discussion on architectural signage, dating back to Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction* (1966) – as well as to its 'sequel', *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (1972), co-written by Denise Scott Brown and George Izenour. It heralds the victory of visual signs over the forms of buildings, relegating numerous projects built at the time to 'mere' *decorated sheds*. Additionally, three years after *The Zero Theorem*, Keiichi Matsuda released his crowdfunded *Hyper-Reality* (2016) – an animated short, depicting a stroll around urban space infested with augmented reality holograms in a similar sequence. Here, unlike in Gilliam, the digital 'logorama' of a surplus projected layer overlapping streets and architecture appears as a result of a Google Glass-type device. It allows the main character to immerse herself in a glowing, intangible environment, while hardly noticing the moment when she gets stabbed in real life.[43]

Intertextuality, as a practice of encrusting a text of culture (filmic, literary) with references to other works of the past, while not necessarily acknowledging them as essential to the plot, can usually be seen as a distinctive feature of post-modernism, creating a textual patchwork. It has been a common practice in cinema to project psychological 'space' onto the characters' surroundings, and in doing so frequently seizing the opportunity to tap the potential of experimental architectural projects. This characteristic of Gilliam's production design has already been pointed out in *Brazil*'s prominent display of building 'intestines', like air ducts and sewer pipes. Electric cables were fashioned after the Centre Pompidou project (1978), still fairly recent and controversial at the time. As Peter Cook remarked in his *Architecture Workbook: Design Through Motive*, Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano's crown achievement came heavily indebted to actual precursors of the circulatory systems style, and could be channelled back to such projects as Michael Webb's *Furniture Manufacturers Association Headquarters* (1957-58), or Archigram's *Monte Carlo* project of 1969.[44] Gilliam expounds on the sources of his inspirations for the film. *One obvious influence on the ducts in BRAZIL was the famous external inwards of the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris, but inspiration also came from closer to home. I'd started to notice all these beautiful Regency buildings in London, where people were just smashing through all the ornate cornice work to put plumbing pipes on the outside.*[45]

Such relationships are echoed in *The Zero Theorem*'s architectural eclecticism, with its 'bugged-in' buildings and the narrative's central locus – the Gothic cathedral adapted

by Leth into an arguably cosy house. Mutilated stucco angels with digital cameras where their heads should be, the visceral wiring branching out down the nave or the LCDs hunched overhead like gargoyles, casting their visual nemesis on streetwalkers – Gilliam's intrusion of the hi-tech into a post-socialist city signals fissure at the heart of commercially-debased Instant City. In the extras portion of Blu-ray release of the film we can see brief memos for each scene and setting, for example: *the city is full of light, sounds and colors (cloth-ing, cars, graffitis) in stark contrast with Q's character and world*, through which we are able to *perceive his uneasiness*.[46] This collaging aesthetics engages shock tactics to communicate its argument concerning the practical side behind the application of smart city infotech (the concept, as well as the technology, the application of the services, and general promise), in a situation when such projects proceed without recognition of the citizens' actual needs, site specificity, or historicity of towns targeted by the developer.

Collaging as methodology

Using photomontage and collage as design methods positions them as a kind of mirror to the concepts, which – in Gilliam's film and Archigram's project – comprises the material city (historic foundation) and its (post)modern touch-up, aesthetically alien to the infrastructure *in situ*. This way, the 'found footage' of photographs has been drawn over with a vivid palette and enriched with playful shapes 'erected' upon the 'layer' of greyish brutalist urbanism. Even more evident are contrasts in terms of colour, form, era, as the *col-lage-making materials and techniques employed in this series of collage-drawings by Ron Herron for the Instant City reflects Pop Art collages such as Robert Rauschenberg, who appropriated images from pop culture media. The images selected contain an identity bound to 1960s and 1970s British culture, clarifying the correlation between consumerism and architecture*.[47] The Zero Theorem strives for a similar effect, embedding imagery of ad campaigns into the fabric of buildings, creat-ing urban materiality that wears a collage-like quality on its sleeve, feeling surreal and thor-oughly commonplace at the same time. It is indistinguishable from a day-to-day fight with predatory pop-ups and hyperlinks that take us just about anywhere in the virtual world. Except in Gilliam – where the amusement park experience of Archigram's compositions turns into a graphic squall, causing oversaturation with imagery – such a stance is conveyed on equal terms by a visual disparity between the LED display downtown and the dimly lit cathedral turned into Qohen's dwelling.

Architecture as software – a software that cloaks

All the more present in Gilliam's film is his ascription to Archigram's vision of the role of architectural hardware/software in the emerging reality, although tainting their mode of perception with an interpretation that is considerably disillusioned. He confirms that the contemporary experience of [p]*lugging in … defines an attitude, not a style; a way of thinking that shows a shift in interest from the building to the device. A shift from aesthetics to the way portable hardware restructures our behaviour … and architecture ceased to carry any symbolic value and has become irrelevant except maybe as a technology of containers of some sort*.[48] Without explicitly referring to Cook and Herron's work, Gilliam views *The Zero Theorem*'s city as al-together consisting of either boxes/containers or flat surfaces/screens.

Even the great supercomputer, Neural Net Mancive, which is fed data crunched by Qohen and other employees of the Mancom corporation, is eventually revealed to be a shell protecting nothing but a black hole. What displays similar behaviour are the cubic land-

scapes of Leth's workspace, an environment created out of blocks constituting an alternate reality in which our protagonist spends the better part of his day. Instead of merely 'updating' historical buildings – as *Instant City* was set to do – *The Zero Theorem*'s metropolis only deepens the rift between the building's facade/skin and its body. Thinking in terms of collage when assembling the world of the film, Gilliam is able to comment on various notions of urban experience – for instance *facadism*,[49] in the way he portrays the tinted fronts of historic buildings and stresses their detachment from the interiors they guard. The hyperreality of networked life, as it 'creeps into' existing structures, imposes itself on the designs. On a more metaphorical level, the set design and CG architecture describes the historical city's silent resistance, its frenzied eclecticism that echoes a similar schism in the introverted character of Qohen. This way *The Zero Theorem*'s central theme is epitomized both visually and spatially (film sets, CGI), while remaining relegated to the function of 'mere' filmic background, i.e. this revelation does not disrupt the unravelling of the plot.

Moreover, *The Zero Theorem*'s take on Instant City notions adds a twelfth point to the project's programme, specifically, to Archigram's practice of introducing novel typologies into architectural vocabulary – which were previously treated as anti-forms – thus reaffirming Archigram's *anti-thetical legacy as form-givers, tethering domes, inflatables, pods, and billboards with wires, gentries, tubes, tracks, trucks, and logs*[50] The difference is that now it recognizes LED displays, computer screens, iPads, and other hi-tech 'altars' as modern trophies to be incorporated into the group's *wunderkammer*, making us notice that architecture has not really dissolved into imagery and software, but is now mediated via hardware terminals of arguably kinetic buildings. Monuments of the past are now scaffoldings on which we support and by which we frame our access to the intangible experiential space.

A case against smart cities going viral

If we take Instant City – along with a plethora of responsive environments postulated by Archigram – as prototypes for smart-city-induced thought, the future London of *The Zero Theorem* poses one significant problem against such classification. It cements a top-down model of organization, favouring a unilateral case of visual communication, involving the corporate messenger just as much as the passive receiver. In other words, Gilliam's city is a broadcasting platform, whereas both *smart-* and *instant-* cities came in as an apotheosis of online models of participation, bottom-up initiatives, even benign cases of hacktivism. On the other hand, urbanists like Adam Greenfield urge us to [c]*onsider that the smart city offers a conception of urban citizenship delivered and received like any other consumer product. It constructs an urban subject active only to the extent that he or she shoulders responsibilities the public sector has withdrawn from, and is otherwise fundamentally passive.*[51]

While illustrating concerns about relinquishing control to corporate forces from this bottom-up model of management, the case mainly concerns 'open access' technologies in city planning, governance, and event organization. Depicting current trends, while extrapolating them into larger-than-life proportions (as any decent science-fiction text does), Gilliam's film formulates a poignant critique of Archigram's modernist utopianism. But instead of rebuking the architectural group's concept, it laments its hijacking by commerce. In essence, along with Archigram, the reliance on modern graphics increased, while subsequent developments in the field witnessed numerous architects and studios experimenting with style, technique, and media. Precisely this shift is 'wreaking havoc' in *The Zero Theorem*, with its encrustation of historical facades – from art deco to communist neo-historicism – with displays.

In a similar fashion to Archigram's *Living City* exhibition, which delighted the visitors by immersing them in an image-saturated setting, Gilliam's dystopia, too, verges on bullying its citizens into cooperatively meeting their own needs. But as Neil Spiller observed in his *Visionary Architecture: Blueprints of the Modern Imagination*, in the first place, *Instant City was about special event when the normal infrastructure of an area could not cope with an 'instant' yet rare occurrence – a music festival for example.*[52] Precisely by extending this emergency situation into a 'permanent intermediacy' does the Instant City eventually fail – it does not dissolve into a network, it ceases to provide infrastructure, it overcomes its target market, instead of supplying it with a requested media hub. It breaks in and takes over, turning a 19th-century or Modernist technological utopia into an intolerable theme park traumatic to pass through, let alone live in.

Conclusions are drawn

Eventually, one begins to wonder whether the urbanized world of *The Zero Theorem*'s London is just as much an event-in-itself, in which lack of participation ceased to be an option? Indeed, architecture has nearly disappeared, deterritorialized by virtual worlds and the bling of commerce, having 'dissolved into imagery' due to a number of artistic techniques, ranging from the director's background in cutout animation, collage-making strategies to the use of CGI in multiple scenes, literally tinting up the run-down look of a post-socialist city. In an ironic 'twist', Archigram's vision is animated in a medium that adapts Cook and Herron's concept into narrative, just as it provides a cinematic immersive experience to exercise the project cognitively, dynamically, to be investigated, or, at least, 'lived through' on the 'big screen'. All in all, it is in film that Archigram's working methodology's prime denominator – metamorphosis[53] – can be inspected at length. Gilliam, while definitely not subscribing to the group's 'social redemption through technology' viewpoint, succeeds in forwarding their notion of *an architecture without architecture, organizing experience without incarcerating it*. He acknowledged – just as Simon Sadler did – that this *would be an architecture to parallel other modern instruments for the organization of spatial experience – the reproduced image, the telephone, the computer – delicious in their flows of fast edits but incapable alone of sustaining human occupation.*[54] Perhaps, architecture is there for us not only to be rendered habitable, but in the same degree to provide temporal shelter, or to be simply passed through; at all times – to be enjoyed, even when IT is raining on Oxford Street.

[1] P. Cook, *Archigram*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 1999, p. 20.

[2] We must not also underestimate Archigram's influence for example on the *Cannon Fodder* segment in Katsuhiro Ôtomo's *Memories* (1995), or the glowy look of the Pleasure City in Steven Spielberg's *Artificial Intelligence* (2001).

[3] *The Smithsons' House of the Future* [...], *Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House (1927–9) and his prefabricated bathroom system of 1938-49* [...] *were beacons to the young suggesting a light-weight, modular and daring future.*; N. Spiller, *Visionary Architecture: Blueprints*

of the Modern Imagination, Thames and Hudson, London and New York 2007, p. 72.

[4] C. P. C. Cabral, "The Architecture of Absence", in: *Structures and Architecture*, ed. P. J. da Sousa Cruz, CRC Press, Boca Raton 2013, p. 418.

[5] *Banham argued that architecture should not simply be about the look of the machine but about its facts, a shortcoming of modernist architecture earlier identified by Fuller. [...] Archigram transformed Fuller's Design Science Revolution into the sci-fi fantasies of 'Walking', 'Disposable' and 'Plug In Cities' (1960-1975), which in turn, influenced the carefully detailed*

exoskeletons and visible service assemblies of high-tech architecture. N. Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture*, Routledge, London and New York 2005, p. 81.

[6] N. Cridge, *Drawing the Unbuildable*, Routledge, London and New York 2015, p. 8.

[7] S. Konomi, *Enriching Urban Spaces with Ambient Computing*, IGI Global, Hershey 2017, p. 168.

[8] *Designing from the outside in, as well as the inside out, creates necessary tensions, which help make architecture. Since the inside is different from the outside, the wall – the point of change – becomes an architectural event. Architecture occurs at the meeting of interior and exterior forces of use and space. ... Architecture as the wall between the inside and the outside becomes the spatial record of this resolution and its drama. And by recognizing the difference between the inside and the outside, architecture opens the door once again to an urbanistic point of view.* (Ibidem)

[9] R. Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, Museum of Modern Art, New York 1966, p. 86.

[10] Ibidem, p. 84.

[11] *This architecture of styles and signs is antispatial; it is an architecture of communication over space; communication dominates space as an element in the architecture of the landscape* (R. Venturi, D. Scott Brown, & S. Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1972, p. 8.); Venturi develops this thought: *Symbol dominates space. Architecture is not enough. Because the spatial relationships are made by symbols more than by forms, architecture in this landscape becomes symbol in space rather than form in space.* (Ibidem, p. 13)

[12] M. de Wall, "The Hackable City", *Architectural Design* 2017, vol. 87 no. 1, p. 52.

[13] C. L. Stimmel, *Building Smart Cities*, CRC Press, Boca Raton, London and New York 2016, p. 229.

[14] H. Song et al., *Smart Cities*, Wiley, New York 2017, p. 100.

[15] M. Carmona, *Public Places, Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design*, Routledge, Amsterdam and Boston 2010, p. 127.

[16] The *quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is the shape, color, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment.* K. Lynch, *The Image of the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1960, p. 9.

[17] M. Carmona, op. cit., p. 127.

[18] K. Wilhelm, "This Lanthorn Doth the Horned Moon Present", in: *Archigram. Symposium zur Ausstellung*, ed. E. Louis et. al, Ritter Verlag, Klagenfurt 1997, p. 52.

[19] K. Franck, "Introduction: Designing with Time in Mind", *Architectural Design* 2016, vol. 86 no. 1, p. 10.

[20] Buckminster Fuller promoted his hemispherical construction as an engineering solution capable of distributing structural stress throughout its structure thanks to the triangular elements arranged in a spherical shape. Already in the 1950s, the domes were perceived as harbingers of future architecture due to their connotation with Fuller's Spaceship Earth concept, together with a number of utopian proposals, e.g. the 1960s *Dome over Manhattan*.

[21] H. Steiner, *Beyond Archigram*, Routledge, New York and London 2009, p. 22.

[22] Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* (1926-2005, and then 2012-) was the first popular magazine devoted solely to science fiction stories, which became the launch pad for a number of the most prominent 20th-century writers in the genre. *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*, or *Astounding Stories of Super-Science* turned up six years later, in 1930, as a rival publication. Nonetheless, it supported young writers like Robert A. Heinlein and A.E. van Vogt with equal zest.

[23] This issue of formal patterns as generators for visionary structures will resurface in Instant City's treatment of cybernetic organizational models, as well as in *The Zero Theorem*'s portrayal of the parasitism of 'media facades'.

[24] In archaeological excavations, an artificial mound or hill.

[25] *Functionalist theory treats residence, work, and leisure as discrete elements. Activities should not mix; hence zoning is a key element of the functionalist city, for in a zoned environment, activities can proceed with little or no interference from other activities.* W. Attoe, D. Logan, *American Urban Architecture: Catalysts in the Design of Cities*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1989, p. 2.

[26] S. Sadler, *Archigram: Architecture Without Architecture*, MIT Press, Cambridge and London 2005, p. 182.

[27] H. Steiner, op. cit., p. 209.

[28] P. Cook, et al., *Archigram, Instant City*, in *The City Cultures Reader*, eds. M, Miles, et al., Routledge, London and New York 2000, p. 125.

[29] Ibidem.

[30] Ibidem, pp. 126-127.

[31] Ibidem.

[32] Ibidem.

[33] The relevance of Fun Palace (1959-1961) to architectural history is its bold use (intended; the project was never built) of freely programmable spaces, conceived as a framework for the rooms and halls hosted inside. These, in turn, could be subdivided, rearranged and refurbished in the same fashion as Centre Pompidou (1972-1977) by Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano was supposed to be, at least in the idea's formative stage.

[34] Among his ground-breaking contributions to machine learning, second-order cybernetics, and responsive environments design (for example, his contribution to the *Cybernetic Serendipity* show in London [1968]), Pask was to develop the cybernetic 'software' for the 'hardware' of Fun Palace.

[35] *Smart city* is a concept gradually introduced to cities and urban areas, which employs a vast network of electronic sensors for data collection. In turn, data feedback to the system is used for a more efficient management of various urban facilities and services, from waste disposal to traffic regulation and crime detection.

[36] Although Dennis Crompton's *Computer City* (1964) and Cedric Price's *Fun Palace* (1961) can also be considered as partial models, in terms of replicating cybernetic networked infrastructures or systems of flow.

[37] M. Weiser, "The Computer for the 21st Century", *Scientific American* 1991, vol. 265 no. 3, p. 94.

[38] S. Sadler, op. cit., p. 194.

[39] Bucharest's original architecture is one of historical eclecticism, with the 'national' style developed out of regionalisms (Brâncovenesc style, also called Wallachian Renaissance) in reaction to previous influences of the École des Beaux-Arts (late 19th century), *assimilating the craftsmanship and ornamentation of the folk architecture*; *Encyclopedia of Twentieth Century Architecture* (volume 1 – A-F), ed. R. S. Sennott, Fitzroy Dearborn, London and New York 2004, p. 336. Modernism brought in new typologies of bourgeois habitation – apartment buildings, social housing, villas (ibidem, p. 337), supplemented in the communist era by rationalism and Stalinist architecture.

[40] T. Gilliam, *Gilliamesque: A Pre-posthumous Memoir*, Cannongate, Edinburgh and London 2015, p. 115.

[41] H. Steiner, op. cit., p. 97.

[42] J. A. E. Shields, *Collage and Architecture*, Routledge, New York and London 2014, p. 101.

[43] However, it is not unlike *The Zero Theorem*'s sequence, where various 'realities' the main character traverses are treated equally, while bleeding into each other unnoticeably.

[44] The architectural backgrounds, or spaces as such, function in *Brazil*'s plot mainly to eke out the protagonist's inner world, but also parallel and comment upon his place and role in the invented world, reflecting his confusion, angst, or just communicating his personality more eloquently than he himself would ever set out to do.

[45] T. Gilliam, op. cit., p. 173.

[46] *The Zero Theorem* (2013) Blu-ray featurettes: location breakdown.

[47] J. A. E. Shields, op. cit., p. 103.

[48] H. Steiner, op. cit., p. 203.

[49] Jonathan Richards defined facadism in *relation to the practice of preserving historic facades or creating replicas, and the construction of essentially new buildings behind*, counting in instances in which *an* existing *facade is reused with a new building constructed behind*. J. Richards, *Facadism*, Routledge, London and New York 1994, p. 7.

[50] S. Sadler, op. cit., p. 8.

[51] A. Greenfield, "Practices of the Minimum Viable Utopia", *Architectural Design* 2017, vol. 87 no. 1, p. 25.

[52] N. Spiller, op. cit., p. 88.

[53] Or, by their own definition of the term, a *continuous evolution from one state (or arrangement of forms, values, incidences or whatever) to another. Always alive but never the same. Always complete but always in metamorphic transience*; D. Crompton, *A Guide to Archigram 1961-74*, Garden City Publishing, Taipei 2003, p. 216.

[54] S. Sadler, op. cit., p. 197.

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Słowa kluczowe:
architektura;
Archigram;
Terry Gilliam;
reprezentacja
przestrzeni

Abstrakt

Maciej Stasiowski

Miasto w stanie płynnym. Filmowa analiza „papierowej architektury" na przykładzie *Instant City* (1968) Petera Cooka i Rona Herrona oraz *Teorii wszystkiego* (2013) Terry'ego Gilliama

Wprowadzenie mediów bazujących na przebiegu czasowym na etapie projektowym wiązało się z nowym rozumieniem przestrzeni reprezentowanej jako tworu dynamicznego i poniekąd zdematerializowanego. Projekty architektoniczne nieprzeznaczone do wybudowania zawsze wiązały się ze specyfiką medium/nośnika. Nieraz ich radykalna estetyka łączyła tradycyjne metody notacji ze współczesnymi prądami w sztuce, jak pop-art w przypadku prac Archigramu. Kino jest kolejnym gruntem, na którym mogą być realizowane tego typu eksperymenty myślowe. Przypadek *Instant City* jest w historii „papierowej architektury" szczególny, gdyż antycypuje miejskie życie w czasach Web 2.0, z kolei *Teoria wszystkiego* Terry'ego Gilliama dobitniej uwypukla bezradność urbanistycznej armatury w nadążaniu za zmianami. W swym artykule autor koncentruje się na najbardziej medialnym aspekcie prowadzonej przez dekady polemiki, czyli fasadach medialnych, ikoniczności, immersji w środowiska wirtualne, responsywnych skórach budynków, spekulując na temat granicy między architekturą a wydarzeniem.