

## Multiple City Updates: INFORMAL SPACE RESERVE

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### Abstract:

Falkenberg's garden city and his informal space caused by the party, give rise to an insight into novel spatial practices and the places that invite to carry them out. Detecting these last ones- among others- in the open grounds and abandoned areas of our cities, they will be considered as informal space reserves and as imagination enhancers. From *movements* and *stories*, images of the possible "multi-city" are developed- as opposed to a simple and evident city of a established "single-reading"- that feeds itself from the same and that needs, to be activated, a perceptual body awareness linked to the place in the everyday dwelling ... it's about the city that is built and diluted in successive cycles through experiences and practices of the multiple juxtaposed individualities, and that is subjected to endless re-readings about how things can be ...

On July 10th 1921 the newspaper "*Der Falkenberg*", expressed in just one sentence the dynamics of the garden-city of the same name: "*Denn das ist klar: wir leben unsere Feste!*" [*"One thing is clear: we really live our parties"*]. [1]

Falkenberg's garden-city, situated near Berlin, was mainly designed by Bruno Taut between 1913 and 1914. Taut, member of the German Society for the garden-city since 1913 and chief executive of the same since 1912 finds in the development of Falkenberg a lab for his ideas regarding the generation of a new society. While the main visual feature of the city is the use of colour and, as it is well known, the use of it was one of the main concerns of the architect at that time [2], in Falkenberg, they are also tested the main two stimuli that Taut considered as essential for a new city and its social organization: the *entertainment* and the *desire of the community*. If the recovery of the use of colour will suppose a certain rebirth or trigger, it is the action according to these two stimuli, the one that will generate the main characteristics of urban space... for Bruno Taut "*architecture only arises if it is supported by an action*" [3].

Fig. 1/ *Erntefestumzug*: August 31st 1919. Falkenberg's holiday moments in different times. Photos provided by Renate Amann from the Genossenschaftsforum's archive, Berlin.

Therefore, on the proposed and built urban framework in Falkenberg- and encouraged by the vibrations and invisible tensions of colour in the urban space- its real spatial quality came mostly defined by informal features associated with the party. The characteristics of informal space would be here referred as defined in 1966 by Edward T. Hall in his text "*The Hidden Dimension*", to the generation of the space that makes the body moving through action.

The *informal space* along with those of fixed and semi-fixed features would conform this way according to Hall, a certain kind of taxonomy of the types of space [4]. From his part, with

regard to the study of the body and its actions - the gesture and its spatial connotations- with over a century of anteriority between 1839 and 1859, François Delsarte [5] had developed a compendium of laws, which also cataloged the body form according to three types that we would perfectly connect with Hall's spatial classifications: the form assumed by man at birth or *constituent form* (could be linked to the space of fixed features); the form that under the influence of the environment and habit is modified or *regular form* (space of semi-fixed features); and the form taken under the influence of temporal emotions that would be the *fugitive form* (we might associate it with the informal spatiality). Therefore as we are saying here, the informal urban space- generated in Falkenberg through action and festive expressions of the celebrations of its inhabitants – overlapped the physical urban space, dissolving it over there, intensifying it here, reorganizing it and consequently re-structuring it dynamically. But, which are the real operators of this informal spatiality? We could actually unfold Falkenberg's festive action into *movements* and *stories*.

Fig. 2/ Left Gret Palucca. In the centre Agathe Otto with her group of dance in Falkenberg. On the right one of the festivals led by Agathe Otto in the mid-twenties.

As for the movements, we'll say that different forms of the same flooded the streets of Falkenberg: dances, parades, marches, races... in its different respective scales both gestures and wanderings or choreographic movements, these shaped architectural masses, spatial flows that experienced through its relational threads wove another superimposed city on the "existing one". The informal flows (bodily) generated in the parties talked, as well as some other contemporary texts – such as "*The Work of Living Art*" (1921) by Adolphe Appia [6]- about how these ones had its own laws based on spatial geometries – *dynamic crystallographies* as Rudolf von Laban would put it [7]- and its effect is precisely to create an architecture in movement- or as Michel de Certeau would name it later on quoting Rainer Maria Rilke, *trees of actions in movement*: "...these trees of actions seethe from one place to another. Its forests walk through the streets. They transform the scene, but cannot be set by the image in just one place" [8]. Both dance and walk had special representations in Falkenberg. Modern dance was living fascinating moments [9]. They were echoed here from their background - François Delsarte's studies before mentioned are an example- from the intense investigations of the German expressionist dance with its main exponents in Rudolf von Laban and Mary Wigman- both capable of representing through graphical methods these informal spaces [10]- also going through the recent experiences of the first German garden-city: Hellerau (1907), where Adolphe Appia along with Jacques Dalcroze developed at the Eurhythmics Institute designed by Heinrich Tessenow these very ideas. In particular the influence of Gret Palucca- one of Mary Wigman's best students and a proper name of the dance experiences of the moment – she arrives in Falkenberg through the daughter of Adolf Otto, one of the main developers of the city: Agathe Otto who was her student in Dresden and will have a group of dance and eurhythmics in

Falkenberg. With respect to walking, we should extend here our journey along the names and studies on informal space. Michel de Certeau, already mentioned, will talk referring to the same about space practices (space for him would be a place practicing a cross of mobility) and among them will give when walking a preferential position: *“The varieties of steps are makings of spaces. They weave places. In this regard, pedestrians’ motor functions form one of these “real systems whose existence actually makes the city”, but they “lack of physical receptacle”. They aren’t located: they are specialized”* [11]. It is precisely by walking how Falkenberg’s inhabitants appear in most of their parties’ photographs. But what kind of content had the parties apart from the aforementioned movements?

Fig. 3/ on the left crowd on the streets of Falkenberg. On the right *Festumzug Gartenstadtweg*, in 1927. Photos provided by Renate Amann from Genossenschaftsforum’s archive, Berlin.

In fact they were builders of stories. Michel de Certeau also gives the story a privileged place in the space practices (expanded informal space). The stories and names found places and structure them. The stories were built and articulated by all the inhabitants, they weren’t imposed, and they became part of the space experience of the city. Some of the slogans of these parties can give us an idea of the same: *“Der Tuschkastenball- die größte Farborgie des Jahrhunderts, die selbst Meister Taut zum Erblassen bringen würde”* (1921) [*“The ink box dance, the great orgy of colour from the twenties that would even pale master Taut”*]; or especially *“Das Chammerfest der Falkenberg Pfahlbauern”* (1924) [*“The chamber festival of the countrymen from the settlement on piles of Falkenberg”*] since previously there was a river over there and they talked in the stories about buildings in the typology of stilt houses recovering this memory. Likewise during this party it was held the funeral of the High Priests *Rah-Rih-Rah-Rullah*, alleged predecessors of the settlement to whom they built a memorial ... This imaginary map was located in the territory and superimposed to the urban mapping, physical, being part of this informal construction of the civic space made of realities and inventions. Besides the stories caused overlaps among times, past, present and future appeared in a single stream. The first celebration occurred in 1914 and subsequently they were held annually from 1919 to 1930. Each time different slogans and stories were created for the celebrations. On the whole, these meant a flight of ordinary life [12], that didn’t mean at all that they weren’t intimately associated with reality - in fact they were, satires or comical situations about what was happening in their lives were hardly almost always built, especially with reference to the established government order - but these tales made that ordinary life more intense and also made it higher. Through the same the conventional political systems were subverted, urban and social, and actually provoked an alternative perception of them, with its subsequent associated practices. And these stories were becoming traces of the urban and popular intimacy [13], formed its intricate workings, the warp of the union of the inhabitants of the urban space, only possible when sung or spoken, narrated... walked or danced... practiced or really lived.

Fig. 4/ On the left *Rah-Rih-Rah-Rullah*'s memorial. In the middle "*Three great diplomats*", 1927, next to one of the parties ads. On the right Zeppelin flying over Falkenberg, 1930.

But while we have emphasized on the street length of the festive actions, we must highlight that these actions found its peak in a specific geographical location, where the stimulus referred by Taut about the thirst for community was being given a special intensity. It was the *Festivals Square*. Located behind *Akazienhof*, it was the place where the presence of nature began to insinuate: the grass grew disorderly and thin hills and trees structured it in a similar scenario to an open ground. The place where Bruno Taut had *crowned* the city [14]. To promote that thirst for community Taut proposed a building made in glass, part of it coloured, material just chosen for its matter qualities: transparency, glows, reflections... that wouldn't have a specific program and it would also consist of a single space that would welcome the joy of life and everyday reality, it would actually house the inhabitant's action. In his plans it was a shelter for the crowds when it rained and included a stage for the great performances emerging from people at festivals. While this crown was never built, it did exist as a space of informal features in the *Square of Festivals*. A city crown (*informal*) that could be made and unmade, it could be constructed and de-constructed through the actions of its inhabitants in each festival. We can say that the open ground of the *Square of Festivals* was the place of choice for the testing of new spatial practices (*informal spatial experiences*). Not because this were a "tabula rasa" but because on the contrary, contained a trace program glut "performative" opened, it was able to accept in multiple latent layers and superimposed new names, stories, movements and appearances that only needed to be updated - practiced, performed- to realize.

Fig. 5/ Actions in the *Square of Festivals*. Photos provided by Renate Amann from the Genossenschaftsforum's Archive, Berlin.

A fascinating example of configuring a new spatiality, from a certain way of moving that is the result of numerous everyday stories about the place, can be found in the film "*Stalker*" (1979) by Andrei Tarkovsky. Alternative spatial practices appear here associated with a quarantined *Terrain Vague*: an area closed to the city is cordoned off and "not practiced" from certain stories that mark it as a place where the usual laws of urban and landscape navigation have been disrupted, even the conventional physical laws of space are questioned. The three protagonists, who go into the *Zone*, must move in the space of this territory (natural, open, of abandoned infrastructures...) according to standards set by several stories: "*Straight lines are not shorter here, the longer the path is the lesser the danger we find. Is it fatal to walk straight up? It's dangerous [...] The Zone is a complex maze of traps. [...] I don't know what happens when there isn't anybody, but as soon as somebody gets in, everything starts moving. [...] safe routes*

*become impenetrable and the paths are, depending on the moment, easier or more confusing than you can imagine.*" The spatiality of the film is based on these alternative practices of space: the layout of cartographies in *real-time* motion -to throw a metal sign away and walk one by one and taking turns in that direction drawing various figures - and the stories- those built to give coherence to their practices. Nothing else is safe; the space is reconfigured at every step associated with our movement. Perceptual consciousness is extreme to detect every change in the relational structure, topological, of this place: we need to be aware of where we are at all times and of our relationship with the rest of the surrounding elements. While recognizing through vision a conventional space- as is the case- the perception is quite another: *the Zone is one of those spaces that invite to new spatial practices*, to new informal configurations. A continuous awareness reviewing the place and our position is needed. It shows and therefore reveals what naturally and without being aware of it we experience when walking around any city.

Fig. 6/ Various stills from the film "*Stalker*" (1979). Andrei Tarkovsky.

Consequently, what features do these places have that invite so intensely to new spatial practices? They would be something like the informal space reserves of our cities. In general we can say that in these places - as in the film "*Stalker*"- the usual ways to move and *read and write* the space get eliminated. Whether it is because due to their conditions we are forced to practice that space differently - they make it hard for us- or just because they aren't possible - there is neither clear infrastructure to read nor guidelines to *write*. They are also able to suggest possible courses of novel actions; it is somehow a suggested choreography. It is in this sense that the choreographer William Forsythe defines what he calls *Choreographic Object*: "...it is by nature open to a full palette of phenomenological instigations because it acknowledges the body as wholly designed to persistently read every signal from its environment" [15] and that's what It promotes. That is, choreographic objects- reserves of informal spaces- would promote the value of the micro-perceptions, of a perceptual awareness that could be called atmospheric, of total contact and disseminated in every pore, in union with the choreographic object in question, just as in Tarkovsky's film "*senses are sharpened up. They reject the "urban" and turn the whole into an experience*" [16].

Can we still consider the open grounds and the rest of abandoned and "deprogrammed" places scattered around the city- we also include here representative buildings and deserted today such as Edificio España in Madrid- a valuable reserve? A compendium of choreographic objects that encourage new spatial practices? Are they still places of programmatic glut and "performative" open practices? In 1995 Ignasi de Solà- Morales in his article "*Terrain Vague*", spoke of how these urban places, were the most representative of what cities are and the experience *we have of them*, they showed the essence of its dynamics in that very moment and

appealed to the attentive ear of flows, energies, rhythms that the pass of time and the loss of limits had established to work in continuity with the same. Also in 2004 Gilles Clément writes in his *Manifeste du Tiers Paysage* ["*Manifesto of the third Landscape*"] how in this places, the question is to be placed inside of them and interact with their dynamics. They also constitute a reservoir of biodiversity, of the ecosystem of which we are part.

Fig. 7/ On the left image of "*White Bouncy Castle*" (1997) choreographic object by William Forsythe next to Dana Caspersen and Joel Ryan. In the centre image of one of Madrid open grounds, (picture by Javier Grijalbo). On the right image of some of the objects collected in a Canadian open ground part of the project "*Le Lustre*" (2006) by Gilles Clément.

From our point of view and in continuity with these ideas, they are still a reserve in addition to the Imagination. It is the reserve of our spatial imagination- and as Mark Johnson would put it [17] our discoverer imagination and thinking in general- and this involves direct experience, movement and proximity, not virtuality. It isn't based on image but experience. Its reality is difficult to represent in fixed photos, it needs sensors of informal moments. It is of interest for the future because to practice these places spatially involves a step into a more intense city, superimposed to the evident, *multiple*- here nobody know what to do so that new possibilities arise [18]- where a greater awareness of environment, atmospheric, will provide a richer and multifaceted urban life, not based on the representativeness and the immediate or in a clarifying and classifying order, but connecting with each one of the practices of each inhabitant. Leaving more space for writing, not just reading. Through listening to the full contact, new spatial suggested practices appear and from them spaces are founded and invented. From them, we can return to our familiar places and practice them, sighting a multiple city that is the link as choreographic object of our body, in an expanded sensitivity of total awareness and not utilitarian but discoverer and hedonistic. In an expanded state of what really meant to live the urban.

#### EPÍLOGUE:

Two overlays: "*Berlin: A Green Archipelago*" (1977) by Oswald Mathias Ungers- and his mates at Cornell University, Rem Koolhaas or Hans Kollhoff were among them- and the story "*El año del desierto*" ["*The Year of the Desert*"] (2005) by Pedro Mairal, centered in the city of Buenos Aires. Understood together they give us a complete picture of the scenario where cities shrink, or its open grounds and green areas grow gobbling the known urban structures, opening to the uncertainty. A bird's eye view, Berlin becomes an archipelago of urban islands floating in a green ocean. From the inside, in Buenos Aires, the inhabitants execute new spatial practices where the living rooms are transformed into streets or the façades into walls ... in an endless re-reading of how things can be.

Madrid, November 18th, 2012

## Notes and references:

- [1] *Der Falkenberg*, nº5. 1921. Genossenschaftsforum's Archive, Berlin.
- [2] Taut, Bruno: *Der Regenbogen. Aufruf zum farbigen*, 1919. In: García Roig, José Manuel: *Arquitectos alemanes. Arquitectos desconocidos. 1 Bruno Taut*, Instituto Juan de Herrera, Madrid, 2002. (p. 32)
- [3] Taut, Bruno: *Die Stadtkrone*, 1919. In: Taut, Bruno: *Escritos expresionistas*, El Croquis Editorial, Madrid, 1997. (p. 48-49)
- [4] Hall, Edward T.: *The Hidden dimension*, Doubleday, Garden City, Nueva York, 1966
- [5] His studies are based on empirical data collection – he observed human being in multiple gestural and positional situations – and produced a general map of this knowledge as well as numerous letters that make a gestural navigation system capable of decrypting the spatial and emotional connotations of the aforementioned gestures. Only one original writing by Delsarte is known (“*Address Before the Philotechnic Society of Paris*”), but his system was transcribed by Genevieve Stebbins and, in the part that corresponds to movement by Ted Shawn. Available: Stebbins, Genevieve: *Delsarte System of Dramatic Expression*, E.S Werner, New York, 1885. And Shawn, Ted: *Every little movement. A book about François Delsarte*, The Eagle Printing and Binding Company, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, 1954.
- [6] Appia, Adolphe: *The work of living art & Man is the measure of all things. A theory of the theatre*, Univ. of Miami Press, Florida, 1960.
- [7] Laban, Rudolf von: *Choreutics*, Macdonald & Evans, LTD., London, 1966. (The original manuscript dates from 1939)
- [8] De Certeau, Michel: *La Invención de lo Cotidiano*, Universidad Iberoamericana, México, 1996. (p. 115) (Original French Edition: 1980)
- [9] One of the most recognized texts reflecting this is AA.VV: *Tanz in dieser Zeit*, Universal Edition, Vienna, 1926.
- [10] Check the author's doctoral thesis “*Materia Activa: La Danza como Campo de Experimentación para una Arquitectura de Raíz Fenomenológica*” E.T.S.A.M, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid.
- [11] De Certeau, Michel. Ob. Cit., (p. 109)
- [12] This festive quality of stories in Falkenberg could be linked to the readings of everyday life and popular culture associated with laughter and the party- and in particular the carnival- made by Mijail Bajtin. Check: Bajtin, Mijail: *La cultura popular en la Edad Media y en el Renacimiento. El contexto de Francois Rabelais*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1987 [The original edition dates from 1941]
- [13] To expand in what sense is understood here the concept of intimacy check: Pardo, José Luís: *La intimidad*, Pre-textos, Valencia 1996.
- [14] As it appears in *Der Falkenberg*, nº7 (8) 1924. Genossenschaftsforum's Archive, Berlin.
- [15] William Forsythe: <http://www.williamforsythe.de/essay.html>
- [16] Taut, Bruno: *Die Auflösung der Städte* [“*La Disolución de las Ciudades*”] 1920. In: Taut, Bruno: *Escritos expresionistas*, El Croquis Editorial, Madrid, 1997. (p. 251)
- [17] Johnson, Mark: *The Body in the Mind. The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1997.
- [18] Let's imagine as an example the Edificio España *practiced* as a public space, multiplier of sunsets – it is *west-oriented*- as many as windows framing the horizon ... as in the project of the Austrian architect Bernd Vlay (“*24 out of 216*” 1997 in which such a transformation is experienced by the urban fabric of Manhattan).