

CITY MAKING AND NARRATIVES

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WWW.MEDIACITYPROJECT.ORG

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- Multiple planners make cities
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- ICT Information
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- Technology and world views

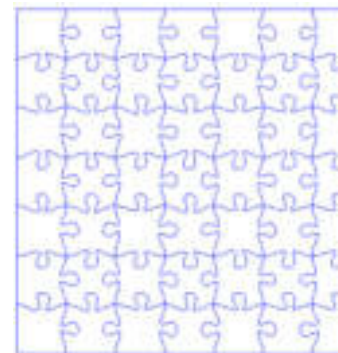
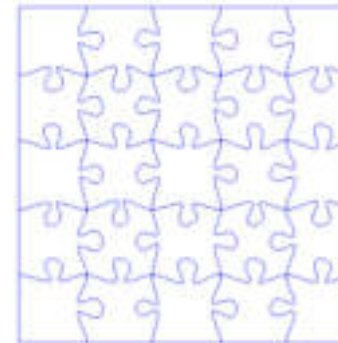
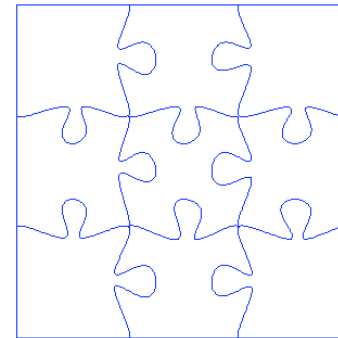
4>NARRATIVE AND VISUAL REPRESENTATION

- Narrative and urban planning
- Dominant narrative
- Underrepresented narrative: storytelling,
participated video making, mapping

1>INTRODUCTION

MEDIACITY LECTURES at the Master in Media Architecture

- Joint effort to define what does it mean MEDIACITY
- There are numerous definition of MEDIACITY in the lectures according to more established disciplines as
 - Sociology
 - Media culture and design
 - Art
 - Architecture
 - Urban planning
- The definition do not follow an interdisciplinary method but it tend to be a new pattern created out of multidisciplinary approaches
- Is Mediacity neologism, a “plastic word” (Uwe Poersken) or a composition of multiple approaches?



1>INTRODUCTION

MEDIACITY and URBAN PLANNING



URBAN PLANNING Theory and practice

- a) Communicative/collaborative planning
P.Healy, J.Forester, D. Schoen, L. Sansdercock, J. Friedmann,
- b) Cultural Representation, Identity and Public Space
Castells, Power of Identity,



SOCIAL STUDIES _ community organizing

Baumann Z, 2001,Benhabib S.,1992,Frug GE, 1999,Goffman. 1983,Giddens A, 1984,Kropotkin P.A., 1982



MEDIA STUDIES _ social, visual and locative media

Abrams J.,2006, Else/where: mapping, New cartographies of networks and territories, University of Minnesota press, Gregory S., Caldwell G., Avni R., Harding T.Video for Change: A Guide for Advocacy and Activism, S. Graham, Cybercity reader

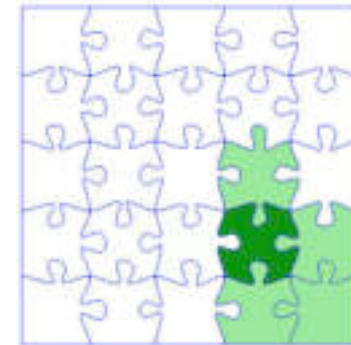


NARRATIVE ANALYSIS: narrative not only to tell a story but an organized structure to sustain an argument or a point of view

Cavarero A. 2001,2003, Jedlowski P, 2000, Coles R., 1989, Kearney R.,2002, Sandercock L., 2003, Eckstein B., Throgmorton J., 2003, I.M. Young,Postman N., 2000, Mandelbaum 2000



PUBLIC POLICY : lack of a consensus on the definition of public policy in general can be stated that "Public policy consists of political decisions for implementing programs to achieve societal goals". C. L. Cochran and E. F. Malone



2>ART OF CITY MAKING

A MATTER OF DEFINITION...

CULTURE AND ETHNICITY: “Les mots de la ville”
(<http://www.unesco.org/most/p2cityfr.htm>)

PATTERNS LANGUAGES: ”patterns can never be designed or built in one fell swoop, but [...] designed in such a way that every individual act is always helping to create or generate larger global patterns” and over the years make a community that has these global patterns in it”. C. Alexander, A Pattern Language

HAZARD AND REGULATIONS: *Polis* in ancient Greek was used to dice-board game and cities, as interplay of chance and rules

COMPLEXITY:”...cities believe themselves to be the work either of the mind or of chance, but neither the first or the second suffices to maintains their walls”. (Calvino, Le città invisibili)

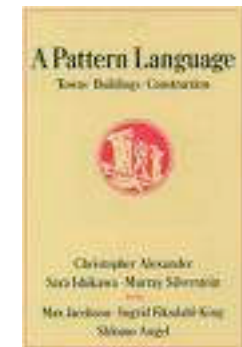
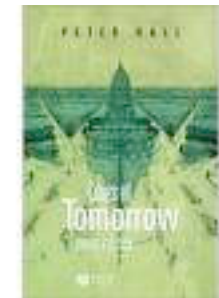
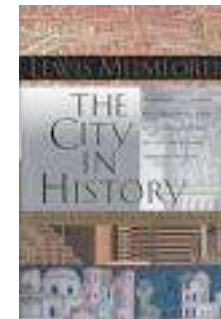
BALANCE: Organized diversity. (U. Hannerz, “Exploring the city”)

DIMENSION “No city should be too large for a man to walk out of in a morning”.(Cyril Connolly, “The Unquiet Grave”,(1944, revised 1951).)

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION:”Today's city is the most vulnerable social structure ever conceived by man”.

Martin Oppenheimer (b. 1930). Urban Guerrilla, ch. 7 (1969).

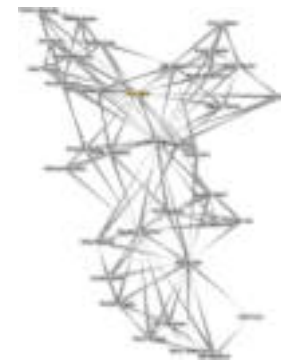
“This City is what it is because our citizens are what they are”. Plato



2>ART OF CITY MAKING

MULTIPLE ACTORS MAKE CITIES

- Professional planners with job titles such as planning experts in the private and public sector
- Professionals who plan but do not have job titles that say planning
- Non-professionals who plan such as
 - Grassroots activists
 - Non profit organizations and associations
 - Informal groups (ethnic communities, squatters, temporary committees and at large citizens)
- Non-professionals who shape what is planned by stopping or changing what professionals have in mind, such as lobbies, strong stakeholders in decision making process....



THE ART OF CITY MAKING

PLANNING DILEMMAS

- Government Regulation v Reliance on Markets
- Equity v. Efficiency
- Comprehensiveness v. Incrementalism
- Bottom up v. Top down
- Utopian v. Pragmatic
- Public interest v. Pluralism
- Autonomous initiatives v. planned activities
- Economic Development v. Environmental Protection
- Local development v. Global trends

- Planning is building a scenario, that implies a public construction of an image/ imagined? imitated? conceptualized? visualized? desired? imposed?....
- How to create a vision for the future?
- Which kind of dialogue among social actors?
- Which type of communication?
- What is the role of communicative tools?



3>MEDIA OR TOOLS

ICT Information Communication Technology

INFORMATION: simple and concluded act; IN-FORMATION “give form” to a concept in a performative, or manipulative manner. Characterized by one way channelling of a message

COMMUNICATION: dynamic process of exchanging messages activated by members of a society. Those messages create our societal knowledge map (Wilden 1978)

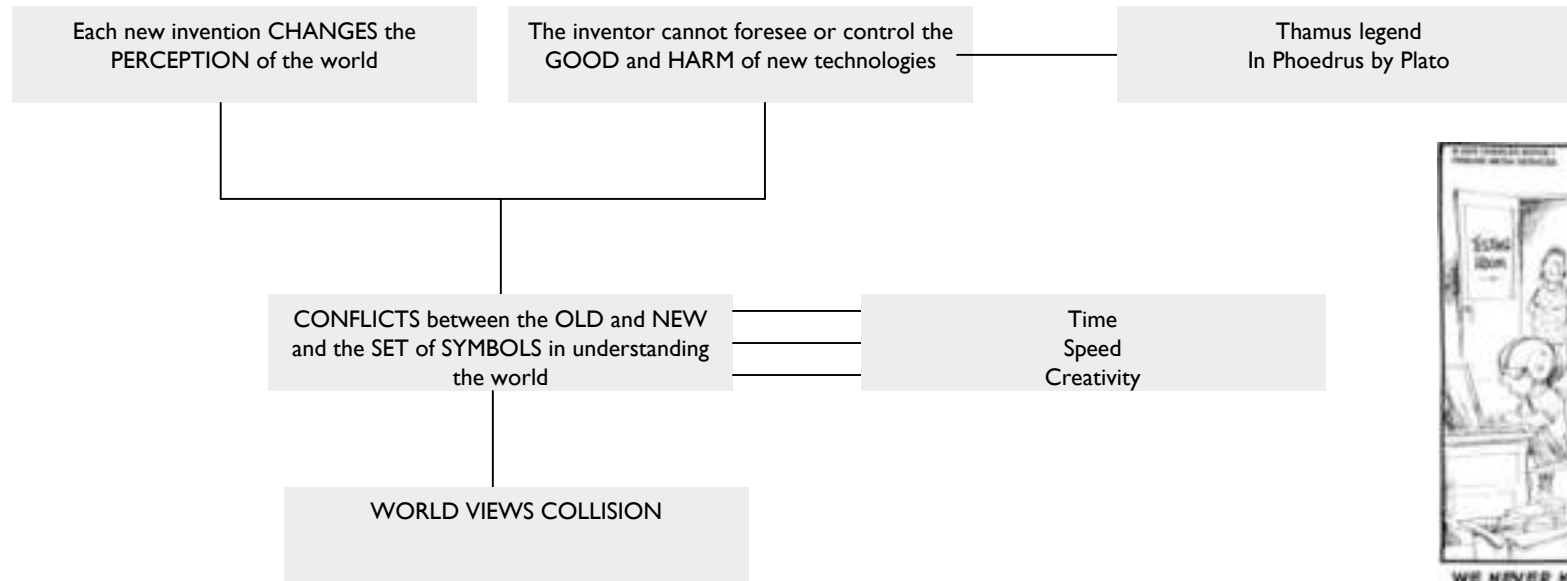
Communication as **KNOWLEDGE SHARING:** (from lat. Communico: put in Common).
The agreement among different subjects determines an organic system where people produce their perception of reality.
Therefore the process of transferring INFORMATION is secondary to the social construct created by people to COMMUNICATE (B. W. Pearce, 1989, “Communication and the Human condition”)

MEDIA are socio-technical apparatus(i), which mediate the communicative process among subjects (F. Colombo, 2005 Atlas of communication orig.IT), and they could be organized according to linguistic (visual, audio, textual codes) and technical characteristics.

Media are therefore part of social relation being both a product and a frame for technological innovation, socio-economic dynamics, social and cultural differences

3>MEDIA OR TOOLS

TECHNOLOGIES AND WORLD VIEWS



NEW TECHNOLOGIES COMPETE WITH OLD ONES- for time, attention, for money, for prestige but MOSTLY FOR DOMINANCE OF THEIR WORLD-VIEW
When media make a war against each other is a matter of WORLD-VIEWS IN COLLISION.



Thamus legend

Thamus, the king of a great city of Upper Egypt once entertained the god Theuth, who was the inventor of many things, including number, calculation, geometry, astronomy, and writing. Theuth exhibited his inventions to King Thamus, claiming that they should be made widely known and available to Egyptians. Thamus inquired into the use of each of them, and as Theuth went through them expressed approval or disapproval, according as he judged Theuth's claims to be well or ill founded. It would take too long to go through all that Thamus is reported to have said for and against each of Theuth's inventions.

But when it came to writing, Theuth declared, "Here is an accomplishment, my lord the king, which will improve both the wisdom and the memory of the Egyptians. I have discovered a sure receipt for memory and wisdom." To this, Thamus replied, "Theuth, my paragon of inventors, the discoverer of an art is not the best judge of the good or harm which will accrue to those who practice it. So it is in this; you, who are the father of writing, have out of fondness for your off-spring attributed to it quite the opposite of its real function. Those who acquire it will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on writing to bring things to their remembrance by external signs instead of by their own internal resources.

What you have discovered is a receipt for recollection, not for memory. And as for wisdom, your pupils will have the reputation for it without the reality: they will receive a quantity of information without proper instruction, and in consequence be thought very knowledgeable when they are for the most part quite ignorant. And because they are filled with the conceit of wisdom instead of real wisdom they will be a burden to society.

- Can be WORLD VIEWS unveiled and represented? Are they recognizable or visible?
- Do MEDIA represent the truth about the world or do they produce meanings about the world through representing it?
- What are the cultural effects created through the proliferation of technical devices which might not correspond with the limited perceptions of use by the consumer?
- What kinds of strategies can be used to increase consciousness about what is already there?
- How can agency be achieved? How can we make choices?

4>NARRATIVE AND VISUAL REPRESENTATION

Planning as performed stories

Plot and characteristics Natural human act

Tempo and dramatic tension (start-middle-end)

Coherence and explanation

Potential for generalizability

Presence of generic convention

Stories use a language of persuasion, organizing knowledge, following events and interpreting their meanings

“Food makes us live , stories are what make our lives worth living. They are what make our condition human”.
Kearney R., 2002, “on stories. Thinking in Action

Stories often provide a far richer understanding of the human and urban condition than traditional social science

Stories reconfigure the past, endowing it with meaning and continuity and so also PROJECT a sense of what will or should happen in the future

Starting from the past, it creates a vision and an image of the future

Planning practice

Community participation processes

Mediation, negotiations and conflict resolution

Urban and territorial analysis

Visual representation either a project map, and so on...

Public policy

It is used to interpret, visualize, listen actively information and to guide actions

Role of Planners

Planners as *story maker*
Planning as performative act, where participants are actors of narration
(Throgmorton)

Planners as *galvanizing agent*
Planning as performative act, where participants are actors of narration
(Sandercock)

Planners as *self reflective weaver of stories*
able to intertwine and mediate plural stories fostering the creation of a public narrative

4>NARRATIVE AND VISUAL REPRESENTATION

DOMINANT NARRATIVES

Dominant stories as “elite” stories

The growth of cultural and image consumption fuels the SYMBOLIC ECONOMY speaking for or representing a city

Financial investments support the construction of a competitive as well as globalized image of a city against grassroots pressures from local communities.

Those who create images –whether they are media corporations, institutions or politicians– freeze a collective identity.

“CREATING PUBLIC CULTURE INVOLVES BOTH SHAPING PUBLIC SPACE FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION (out of multiple narratives) AND CONSTRUCTING A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF A CITY”

Ref. S. Zukin, “The Culture of cities”, 2000

Dominant stories as foundational stories

Ref. L: Sandercock, *Out of the closet*, 2003, p18

Dominant stories vs counternarratives

Narratives with individual and collective values, to reclaim space in a public dialogue

Ref. Davis



Strategies

- Involve people in common creative experiences such as rituals, streets intervention, workshops, actions in public space and strategic planning processes
- Foster critical observation of the everydaylife with different methods and appraoches (e.g. *practical exercise (George Perec)*:
 - *Observe the street, from time to time, with some concern for the system perhaps.*
 - *Apply yourself. Take your time.*
 - *Note down what you see.*)
- Subvert the uses of technical devices,use open source, low cost and easily available tools while foster low tech, friendly uses of technology

4>NARRATIVE AND VISUAL REPRESENTATION

Digital Storytelling

Every community has a memory of itself.
Not a history, nor an archive, nor an
authoritative record...

A living memory, an awareness of a collective
identity woven of a thousand stories.

The Center for Digital Storytelling is a
California-based non-profit 501(c)3 arts
organization rooted in the art of personal
storytelling. We assist young people and
adults in using the tools of digital media to
craft, record, share, and value the stories
of individuals and communities, in ways
that improve all our lives.



4>NARRATIVE AND VISUAL REPRESENTATION

Project FOTORAMA

workshop for the production of a short film with a mixed technique of animation and photography

An occasion to discover more in detail the artistic potentialities of digital devices and to obtain an overview so it can be more easy to have one deepened look on their potentialities. To join didactics and creativity, creating a workshop for not specialized people. Simple informations that can be reproduced in the daily experiences. An occasion to rediscover our territory.

AIM

We want to offer to an introduction to the audio and video editing and give cues for the development of individual creativity. We deserve **to transform consumer technology in to a real instrument of communication**, supplying technical knowledge and mental instruments that can be applied on several fields. We offer to the participants and the institute the possibility of a **new vision** of the territory, realized with an active instrument that is competitive with the most modern techniques of communication.

LOCATIONS

The place/places described from the workshop is a concentrate of the analyzed territory, based just on the direct and daily experiences of the participants. We assign to who lives from years in a place the task to illustrate it in a visual and acoustic way, the making of a historical and fabulous narration is the attempt of the job, entrusting itself to the memories and to the affections that anyone has of the place that he attends daily: a wall, one road, a noise, a fountain, a store, a face, an old poster etc. To give to the things that normally we see a evocative value. To create a **collective portrait of the reality seen with the eyes of who really lives it and makes the portrait**. There will be the possibility to create a path: a region, a province, a city, a group of houses, one street, a tree.



4>NARRATIVE AND VISUAL REPRESENTATION

FOOTPRINT MAPPING

"Footprint mapping" is an attempt to create a digital map of streets and public spaces by gathering "footprints" of participants of the project. The artist creates DIY style digital mapping system consisting of cheap pedometer(step meter), digital compass, micro processor, web cam and laptop computer. All the system will be set on a custom made backpack so that one of the participants can try.

The map will be made from the information gathered from pedometer(step meter) to measure the distance by counting steps, digital compass to find directions for every single step, web cam which will be installed above of the person and look down to take digital photographs of surroundings for each step. Laptop computer generates dynamic collage of photographs in real time and show it on the screen so that all the participants can share the process.



COMMUNITY MAPPING PROJECT East Somerville

During the summer of 2005, Somerville Community Corporation worked with a team of interns and community members to collect data and information about East Somerville. This information was then incorporated into a large map, which has now been turned into this on-line map, in order to tell a story about East Somerville.

The goal is to encourage others to interact with the map and each other as they identify what's important, what action steps can we take, as a community, to preserve the good, and change the bad?

<http://www.somervillecdc.org/communitymap>

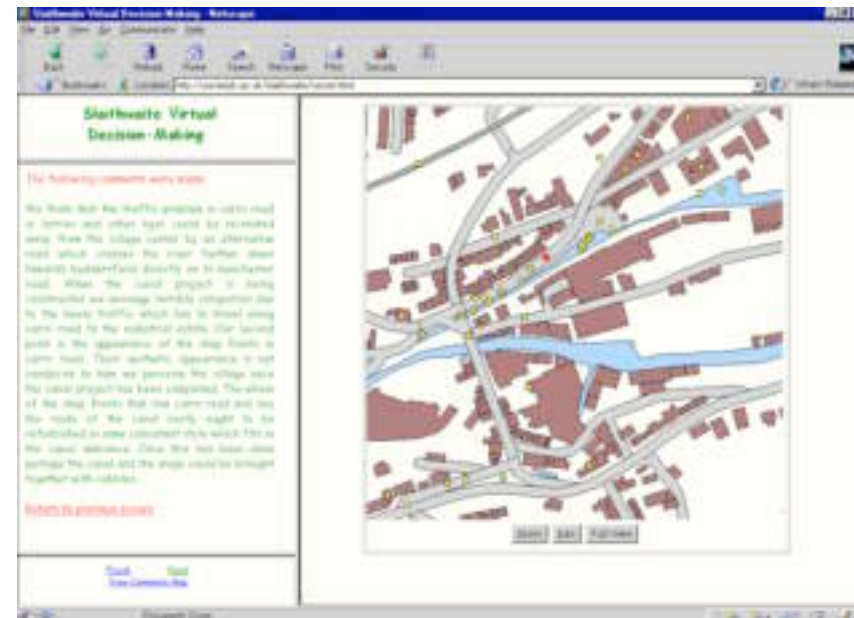


4>NARRATIVE AND VISUAL REPRESENTATION

PLANNING FOR REAL (ONLINE) Participatory planning tool

A large 3-dimensional model of a neighbourhood is constructed, preferably by local people, using cardboard cut-outs for buildings pasted onto a base plan fixed to polystyrene or cardboard. The model is used at pre-advertised sessions held in various locations in the community.

Participants place suggestion cards on the model indicating what they want to see happen and where (eg playground, parking, standpipe, tree, shopping). The cards are sorted and prioritised to establish an action plan which is followed up by working groups.



<http://www.somervillecdc.org/communitymap>

4>NARRATIVE AND VISUAL REPRESENTATION COMMUNITY MAPPING

Cartografia Resistente, an Italian project that combines psychogeography, digital mapping and political activism. The idea stems from a desire to explore the territory "from below," to offer other tools able to describe the territory, independently from the copy-righted geo data that government proposes.

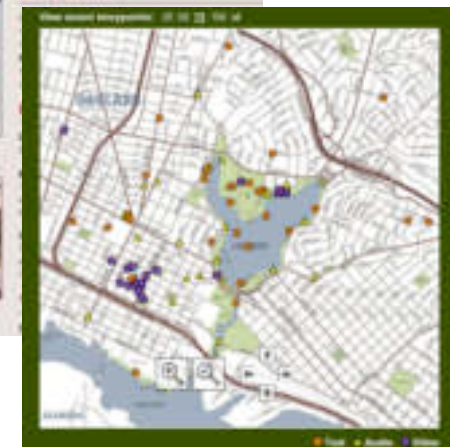
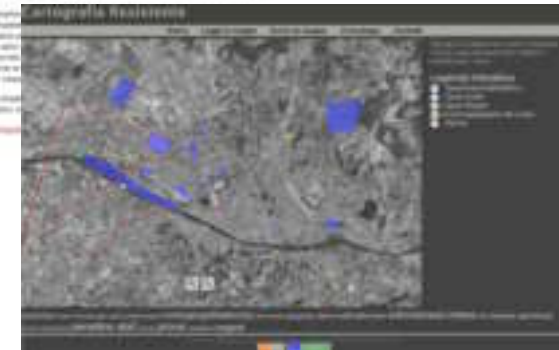
<http://mappeaperte.net/cartografiaresistente/>

The Organic City, which will emerge organically during 2005–06, will use these technologies to create a collaborative digital storyworld centered on the downtown Oakland areas surrounding Lake Merritt.

The project seeks to connect with the community through this website where you can find and tell stories about local places. In addition, the project offers mobile media that can be experienced onsite with mobile media players and Pocket PC's.

Ultimately, we hope the project will allow us to explore the relationships between place, story, and community; as well as the ways in which new technologies can enhance our appreciation for these important components of human identity and experience.

<http://www.organiccity.org>



Conclusions

How to affect the decision making process?
How to prevent false argumentations?

- Exercise criticism in the planning practice
- Reflecting in action (D. Schoen M. Rein)
- “The only cure for false, manipulative talk is more talk that exposes or corrects it, whether as a string of reasons, a mode of recognition, a way of making points or a narrative” (I . M. Young)