WHERE DO YOU BREATHE?

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www.wheredoyoubreathe.net

Image: courtesy of Kenny Cupers

Introduction: project summary and key question

The project *wheredoyoubreathe.net* consists of three elements: a photographic essay, an urban intervention, and a website. The photographic essay forms an investigation of the city through the act of walking. As opposed to the image of the city as a dense world and a conglomerate of vibrant urban spaces full of things, the photographic essay tries to portray it as a tranquilised terrain open to contemplation, a post-industrial and uprooted, yet surprisingly bucolic landscape where one can roam and linger. By walking the landscape, open yet personal spaces get revealed alongside the city's designated living, working or sociable spaces. They function as possible chill-out spaces for the city walker, and could be called 'breathing spaces'. The photographic essay is as much a search for this specific urban space as it is an evocation of London as a fluid landscape of possibility.

These images of 'breathing spaces' in London are then turned into an urban intervention. They have been distributed and displayed in the city on 500 postcards in summer 2004 (in phone boots, on buses, tubes carriages, coffee shops, internet cafes, etc.). By adding on the back of the postcard a description of the place where each image was taken, the finder of the postcard is invited to visit and explore these places. In this sense, the deliberate displacement of images suggests nomadic human movement in the city. Opposing indulgence in photography's tendency for the voyeuristic gaze into either the horrific or the exotic, this urban intervention curates photography in a way that it stimulates active exploration.

The urban exploration is intensified through a website, the address of which *(www.wheredoyoubreathe.net)* is also printed on the postcards. By locating the images of 'breathing spaces' on an interactive map of London, the website functions as an alternative city guide for planning urban explorations. In this sense, the map on the website functions not as a flat rule-governed space, but as an open territory for imaginary intervention. By asking 'Where do you breathe?' and by recording the users' answers on the interactive map, the website aspires to act as a self-growing information platform for people to communicate their walking experiences.

The key questions evoked through this project are: *in which ways can people be stimulated to see urban space in alternative ways, by walking? How can imagination be released on the physicality of urban space? How can the virtual reservoir of potentiality that hangs over urban space be 'actualised' through walking? Can the city be transformed by using it, by looking at it, or by walking it?* The presence of the moving body in urban space constitutes an experiential transformation of urban space for the city walkers themselves, but how does this affect the city itself as a conglomerate of spaces and people? And what exactly is the interplay between a physical and an experiential transformation of the city?

In its attempt to stimulate a creative attitude towards the urban landscape, the project questions authorship with regard to urban space and as such addresses relations of power and creativity in the city. Indeed, where can creativity be located in this particular initiative – in its production and in its reception? What subjectivities and power relations are involved in the processes of urban transformation – be it imaginary or physical? Where can creativity with regards to urban space be located? By explicitly categorising users' perception and transformation of urban space as a form of 'urbanism', the visual project poses the question of what a creative transformation of urban space could be. In putting forward the practice of walking, it reflects on the transformation of the city into a fluid, continuous space of desire: the city becoming a second nature. Finally, by integrating photography, urban intervention and interactive media, the project questions

methodologies in understanding and transforming the city today. The route that is followed in this essay reflects the hypothesis that is tested in the visual project itself: it investigates, through photography and its curating, how people can be stimulated to see the city differently by walking it.

1. Power, creativity and the city

Since modernity's functional specialisation of subjects into professionals, the individuals involved in urbanism – in making or changing the city – have traditionally been the architects and the urban planners. In a modernist vision, they, as defenders of rationality and pragmatism, have developed tools and technologies to transform the city. The formation of this specific subjectivity involved in urbanism has invoked a strong dichotomy between 'the planners' as creators of space, and 'the (local) people' as its users. Urban space itself seems to be similarly caught up in a dichotomy: throughout modernity, the city has been imagined either as a disciplinary space where people are governed through rational urban planning, or as a dark space of alienation and estrangement, a space out of disciplinary control. This can be seen as the reflection of two differing concepts within modernity: the idea of rationalisation described by Weber and proposed as urban solution by Le Corbusier, and the estrangement of the individual in the rapidly changing metropolis as described by Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin[1]. Modernism indeed considered urbanism and urban planning mush as a graphic reasoning to govern the city: urban planning has functioned as a technology of the self, and this is exemplified by the concept of the panopticon. This organisational type does not need a controlling body in its centre; its disciplinary system is internalised into the minds and bodies of the city. As opposed to this ideal of self-government appeared the vision of urbanism as a tool of liberation: the city's disorder as origin of revolution, and the city as medium for direct action. These are some of the ways the modernist vision of the city is caught up in a

dichotomy between the planned and the unplanned, the rational and the irrational.

Today such modernist vision with regard to urban space however, is acknowledged to fail to understand the multitude of transformations in the contemporary city. Indeed, considering the collaborations and shifts between planners, local groups and councils, and seen the lack of rationality to urban planning initiatives and the disorganisation that is a side effect of late capitalism, the multitude of interventions that constitute and transform the urban landscape come into focus. As a result, the dichotomy between urban planning and its others starts to blur. This corresponds to a recent "proliferation of forms of politics and of types of contestation which cannot be calibrated in terms of the dichotomies of traditional political thought"[2].

Indeed, the binaries of planned and non-planned, domination and emancipation, power and resistance, strategy and tactics, civility and desire, are increasingly unable to provide insight in recent urban transformations. Today, domination tends to operate not merely through modernist technologies of urban planning, but through complexity itself, through Baudrillard's non-linear systems that could once naively be considered as tools of emancipation[3]. Similarly, government operates not simply through central control (the 'planned') or even market economies, but through so-called 'non-planned' self-organising networks[4]. In the same way as power and resistance are not simply opposites, freedom is a historical concept created by liberalism and it is not antithetical to government but rather inextricably linked to it: "Freedom is the name we give today to a kind of power one brings to bear upon oneself, and a mode of bringing power to bear on others"[5]. As such,

1 See VIDLER, Anthony, "Spaces of Passage: The architecture of estrangement – Simmel, Kracauer, Benjamin", in: *Warped Space*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2000

2 ROSE, Nikolas, P*owers of Freedom – Reframing Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 2

surveillance and globalised control can be seen as the price to be paid for the maintenance of a certain concept of freedom.

However, this "microphysics of power acting at a capillary level within a multitude of practices of control that proliferate across a territory"[6] goes together with a micro-politics of desirer. In addition to these forms of capillary power, new forms of political subjectivity are appearing, that instigate creativity and innovation in the urban landscape. Beyond the dichotomy of urban planning and its others is thus the complexity of individual and collective input in the creation and transformation of urban space. This cannot be simply understood as self-governance or resistance, but includes potentiality and creative instinct.

The image of the contemporary city then becomes one of a multitude of urban transformations that originate from the field of diverse actors and interventions, and are characterized partly by hierarchical, partly by grass root organization. The city's transformation is not simply defined by built form and planned by an elite of architects and urban designers, nor spontaneously inhabited by 'the people', but is characterized by a changing urban culture and is the unintended collective result of human decisions, through a multitude of actions. The simple dichotomy between the 'planned' and the 'unplanned' then disappears. Urban space constitutes a double movement, where mechanical forms of physical intervention, standardized and restricted forms of social interaction alternate with innovative practices in the urban territory. Rather than simply attached to a static and fixed individual or institution, power and similarly creativity, are thus to be seen as distributed and relational characteristics among a heterogeneous group of spatial users, initiators, policy makers, scientists, artists, etc. Urban change is invoked as a conscious effect and as a side effect of urban users' actions in contact with different urban materialities and spatialities. The questions then become: what

are the sorts of subjects and subjectivities involved in the transformation of the city today? And how exactly is creativity played out in the urban landscape?

2. DIY Urbanism

Indeed, if the dichotomy between the planners as creators of the city and the people as its mere users has become blurred, and if creativity and power are distributed in different subjectivities and spatialities, how can we conceptualise the user's creativity in relation to the city?

Through his conceptualisation of space and society through what he calls the 'social production of space' Lefebvre has been an important figure to emphasise the user's ability to influence urban space. Beyond its material spatiality, urban space carries a strong social dimension: according to Lefebvre urban space is not to be seen as a Kantian a priori, but is actively produced within a social and ideological context[7]. Through this social production of space, individuals and groups are acknowledged to have the ability, albeit it with varying power and success, to actively produce urban spaces, and as such, to contribute to the transformation of the city. This conceptual step towards a 'radical democratisation of urbanism' is embodied by Constant's New Babylon project and by the practices of the Situationists. Such urban movements have succeeded in developing a distinct 'counter-culture' – a mostly youth-centred cluster of interests and practices mostly

[3] see Scott Lash's work, for example LASH, Scott, "Informational Totemism", in: BROUWER, Joke & MULDER, Arjen (eds.), *TransUrbanism*, Nai Publishers in collaboration with V2, Rotterdam, 2002, and also MANOVICH, Lev, "Totalitarian interactivity", downloaded from www.manovich.net

[4] ROSE, Nikolas, *Powers of Freedom – Reframing Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 17

[5] ROSE, Nikolas, *Powers of Freedom – Reframing Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 96

[6] ROSE, Nikolas, *Powers of Freedom – Reframing Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 17

[7] see LEFEBVRE, Henri, "The social production of space", Blackwell, Oxford, 1984 (original French edition: Editions Anthropos, 1974)

around issues of green radicalism, direct action politics, new musical sounds and experiences – that tends to produce what has been called 'Temporary Autonomous Zones': distinct spatialities for alternative communities concerned with resistance and radical empowerment[8]. At first sight their 'alternative urbanisms' such as squatting, clubbing, community gardening, alternative festivals (e.g. Burning Man), and other forms of temporary use[9] could indeed be seen as examples of such a Situationist-inspired force of resistance, and as epitomes of a creative transformation of the urban landscape.

Nonetheless, the delineation of a creative but marginal counter-culture in opposition to a passive but powerful mainstream seems to offer an alternative schema that effectively does nothing more than reverting to the initial problematic position. By converting an old dualism within urbanism to a new one – 'the planner' versus 'the user' now becoming 'the powerful' versus 'the creative' – it fails to provide insight in the cultural confusions and mutations between those categories that is prevalent in the contemporary city. In a similar fashion Lefebvre's rigid connection of the city's material spatiality with its ideological dimension results in a certain form of spatial determinism: when a distinct social situation produces a distinct spatiality, each space is alleged to signify a certain kind of social behaviour, a claim negated by many social transformations of urban space[10]. This rigidity ultimately allows only a very limited definition of spatial or social creativity, a predicament that is similarly reflected in Michel De Certeau's opposition of strategies and tactics. As a result this sort of theory tends to privilege one form of resistance against a caricature of power. Moreover, the question rises whether the simple juxtaposition of a *globalisation from above* – often identified with domination and power – and an alternatively heroic *globalisation from below* – one of resistance and creativity – actually corresponds with the contemporary urban dynamic[11].

In fact, most of the initiatives of 'radical' or alternative urbanisms cannot simply be separated from other processes of urban transformation, such as for example gentrification. Squatters often discover hidden potentialities in the voids of the urban landscape, but as soon as they have reached certain gravity or influence, they tend to be taken on board by more powerful cultural industries – signifying a process from squatting an empty industrial building to the arrival of Starbucks, a process that has transformed many post-industrial empty areas into 'cultural quarters'. The cultural industries in major cities like London embody this new and sophisticated bond of power and creativity: "The rise of the Creative Economy is drawing the spheres of innovation (technological creativity), business (economic creativity) and culture (artistic and cultural creativity) into one another, in more intimate and more powerful combinations than ever"[12]. Other bottom-up types of temporary use – a festival, a rave, etc – also tend to be simulated by hierarchical institutions or multinationals: companies like Nike and Adidas copy sub-cultural strategies and organize informal, sometimes even illegal leisure activities to infiltrate youth culture and market their products[13]. As such, the tactics of 'globalisations from below' are inextricably linked to the strategies of 'globalisations from above'; informal and formal economies do not only coexist, but also depend on each other.

Consequently, the multitude of relations between spaces and identities could be .reconfigured in a more complex schema[14].

[8] see MCKAY, George (ed.), *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*, Verso, London & NY, 1998 and BEY, H., TAZ: *The temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, Autonomedia, Brooklyn NY, 1985

[9] see for instance URBAN CATALYST, "Strategies for temporary uses – potential for development of urban residual areas in European metropolises", September 2003, download from website www.templace.com

[10] see for instance MULTIPLICITY, USE – *Uncertain States of Europe*, Skira Editore, Milano, 2003

[11] see KEITH, Michael, "The Cultural Quarter – Globalisation, hybridity and curating exotica", Chapter 8, as yet unpublished

The question 'What kind of creative transformation acts as a resistance against commodification of culture?' could be better formulated outside the dualistic framework of power and resistance in this way: how does creativity arise out of the situation of human beings engaged in particular relations of force and meaning? If each urban user/producer has the ability to construct their own reality in the urban landscape – resulting in overlapping and conflicting realities – we can thus start to conceptualise the user's potential creativity in terms of individual and collective imagination in using their environment. This results in a city that is the conglomerate of overlapping and sometimes opposing realities of its users: there are as many cities as there are users, or people thinking about it. This possibility for a personal or collective creativity in the urban landscape could be called a DIY urbanism. This term signifies an attempt to explicitly consider such – often-ephemeral – productions of space as a form of transforming the city, as a form of urbanism. DIY urbanism illuminates the potential of creativity within capitalism but in opposition to anarchic urbanisms, it does not locate it outside of it, or even on its margins, but as immanent to it.

Rather than seeing DIY urbanism as an immediate physical transformation, the experiential transformation of the individual is also considered as a creative force in urbanism. Other ways of relating to space are to be seen as urban interventions, that influence how space is perceived rather than change the way space itself exists. This experiential change can be seen as "a series of more direct experiments in living which have an immediate aesthetic quality"[15]. The concept of resistance seems to imply a subject who resists out of an act of bravery or heroism. But courage is redundant in creating one's environment, and creative subjects in the city are cautious, experimental and tentative. Rather than a Situationist inspired admiration for the heroism in popular visions of power, there is the opportunity for a vitalism, an active art of

living that moves towards a space of flow, affect and desire.

These are some of the ways in which DIY urbanism goes together with an alternative dimension of subjectivity, that is appearing, and that could be close to what Deleuze-Guattari describe as a nomadic subjectivity: "Thus nomadology is a process that constantly resists the imposition of hierarchical organisation and fixed meaning – drawing instead, upon an environment constantly in flux"[16]. Bearing in mind the conceptualisation of the user's creativity in the urban landscape, the question rises how we might understand this nomadic notion of subjectivity with regards to the walker in the urban landscape.

3. Walking as a creative transformation of space
According to Stalker: "Crossing is (…) a creative act, that means creating a system of relations within the chaotic juxtaposition of time and space that characterises 'Actual Territories'"[17]. How can the practice of walking be considered a form of transforming the city, a form of creating one's own city? And how is the city transformed through walking? *Walking as a form of DIY urbanism*, a creative transformation of urban space, involves an altered state of mind that induces a *perceptual intensification*. It is an act

12 Richard Florida, quoted in KEITH, Michael, "The Cultural Quarter – Globalisation, hybridity and curating exotica", Chapter 8, as yet unpublished.

13 see URBAN CATALYST, "Strategies for temporary uses – potential for development of urban residual areas in European metropolises", September 2003, p. 11 download from website www.template.com

14 see KEITH, Michael & PILE, Steve (eds.), *Geographies of Resistance*, Routledge, London & New York, 1997, and my previous essay for Michael Keith's course Reading the City: "Towards a nomadic geography – Rethinking space and identity for the potentials of progressive politics in the contemporary city"

15 ROSE, Nikolas, P*owers of Freedom – Reframing Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 282

16 TUTERS, Marc, "Geograffiti as the digital production of nomadic space", 17.09.2003, on: http://rixc.lv/txt/txt/.php?id=136&l=en

17 Stalker group, see www.stalkerlab.it

that causes the intensification of our gaze, touch, ears, and sense of becoming. Intensified perception involves allowing oneself to listen and take in without judgement or rejection, and is the condition evoked by the body and mind crossing the urban landscapes. The body and the mind open themselves as an ensemble of desiring agencies, as de-centred as the landscape is itself: crossing without ever going through the centre[18].

There seems to be a continuous tension in the walker's mind, a tension between walking and resting, between the restlessness of the walk and the projected peace of the place to rest, but also a tension between the contemplative continuous duration of walking and the restlessness of being (stuck) in a place. This tension deals with the simultaneity of continuity and change. The hunger for change in walking provides the energy of deterritorialisation: "Walking and drift are hunger towards the world, it is what moves us to trace paths across the planet"[19]. On the other hand, walking can also be experienced as restless, whereas the temporary territorialisation allows one to better take in and understand the city.

Connected to this tension between walking and resting, between place and space, is the moment of projection within the walker's mind. This is the projection of a place onto an image that is desirable. Nonetheless, within the liquid space of the walk, the image is a catalyst and a residue rather than something that comes in the place of, something that represents the walk itself. As such, the tension and projection processes that occur during the walk make clear that it is not easy to determine where exactly the desire of walking is located: it is not simply a desire from a position of restlessness towards a restful place, because the *desire* also creates the restlessness and destroys the possibility to rest. The 'breathing space' is thus found exactly in this tension between walking and resting: it is not an allocated place, but a liquid space of duration that is the duration of the walk. The space is

formed in the line of the walk, between A and B, not in A or B itself. *The walker transforms the discreteness and separateness of the city into a fluid landscape: the city becomes landscape through the walk.*

Because the walk is not merely goal-oriented and breaks with the automatic pilot mode of perception, the walker is able to transform the city into a field of game and chance. By giving over to the city, this city becomes another world: "*Homo Ludens* himself will seek to transform, to recreate, those surroundings, that world"[20]. The city is thus not only transformed in a certain mental customisation process, but also becomes playful in its unpredictability: outside influences come into the mind/body and enter the game – a chance encounter, follow a person, a clue, be guided by the inconspicuous. It is this non-purposive rationality that means we can lose ourselves in the game that is the urban walk: as a consequence of letting go, means-end rationality makes way for an open-ended, experimental and affective mind-set[21].

The transformational processes involved in the practice of walking blur the boundaries between the 'mental' and the 'physical'. Walking obviously does not add new buildings to the urban landscape, but the walking body and mind are able change its dynamics: the walking body is in an ecosystem that is the urban landscape[22]. In the body of the walker, as well as in the surrounding landscape, the flows of

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18 Stalker group, see www.stalkerlab.it

19 Stalker group, see www.stalkerlab.it

20 NIEUWENHUIS, Constant, "New Babylon", from the Situationist Archive website, http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/presitu.html

21 LURY, Celia, "The game of Loyalt(o)y: diversions and divisions in network society", In: *The Sociological Review*, vol. 51, no. 3, published by Blackwell for Keele University, August 2003, p. 315

22 Or in post-humanist non-linearist jargon: 'subject and surrounding objects react as elements of matter and energy and engage in intensive processes of becoming involving spontaneous spatio-temporal dynamisms, or processes of self-organisation', see DE LANDA, Manuel, "Deleuze and the open-ended becoming of the world", at: http://www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/vy2k/delanda.cfm

energy cause a continuous qualitative change, an eternal becoming. The city/world now appears as an open, creative, complexifying and simultaneously simplifying cauldron of becoming and the search for this aspect of the city is regulated through the activity of walking: the city, discontinuous at a static look, becomes a fluid urban landscape only in the experience of walking.

"For Lefebvre, power encoded urban space with dominant ideology, which, as part of the city's built environment, became reified as a kind of 'second nature'"[23]. This *second nature* can be experienced through a process of accepting culture as nature. However, in the course of the walk it is not a nature of hidden dominant ideologies that loom over urban space as in Lefebvre's vision, but a nature of desiring flow and intensity: walking in the city can be like walking in a forest. Consequently, nothing has to be liberated or contested when the walker experiences this 'second nature': the walking body is far away from the repression of dominant ideologies and that is what I have attempted to convey in the photographic investigation of walking.

My personal walkscape of 'breathing spaces' evoked in the photographic work, consists of a number of themes: the deserted railway viaduct that has turned into a raised linear park (Shoreditch), the marshes with their water reservoirs and power pylons serving the city (Walthamstow), the monumental ex-dockland plains alongside the DLR railway (East India beach, Excel parking lot and Gallions Reach pier), and the desertion of the night-time city centre (the City). The images show the silent city glowing in the sky in the urban park, the nightly reflections of city lights seen from the quiet riverbank, futuristic spaces solidified and abandoned objects for free use, former industrial buildings inundated in flower fields, vast marshlands punctuated by 'furniture', pebble beaches near council estates – post-industrial desertion and a returning nature. Deserted post-industrial spaces show an important aspect of this sensitivity for the landscape: the returning nature in between the gaps and cracks of the urban system embodies the desire for the outside space of culture, and the escape from the city. However, this projected Nature is not a romantic, but a post-industrial nature where the urban networks serving the city come together (such as the water reservoirs and electricity in the marshes for example). It is thus ambivalently positioned in and outside the urban.

The desire to escape from the multiplicities of the urban, away from the crowds into the continuous of the natural, can be seen as the eternal return of the sublime in the 'quasi-immanent' city of today, a continual desire for the outside. Through this desire the city becomes in a sense a 'second nature', a nature of open possibility or virtuality. This experience of a second nature is not the projection of a transcendental Nature onto the existing urban landscape, but rather a specific sensitivity for hybrid artificial-natural elements in a post-industrial techno-ecology. In other words: where does my body find a comfortable space to walk and rest? The ambivalence of the walk is defined by this continual search for a potential outside that will turn out to be situated on the inside: *the walk transforms the city into landscape.*

4. Photography and interactive media: the image as urban intervention

After having discussed the main themes involved in the project – DIY urbanism and walking as creative transformation – we can more directly address the first question evoked through this project: in which ways can people be stimulated to see urban space in alternative ways by walking? Indeed, how to engage a public, how to stimulate it and allow it to interact? Whereas the walking and photographic part of the visual

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23 TUTERS, Marc, "Geograffiti as the digital production of nomadic space", 17.09.2003, on: http://rixc.lv/txt/txt/.php?id=136&l=en

project work introspectively to illuminate some of the themes involved in walking, the other part of the project intends to open a dialogue with the viewer/user by explicitly asking 'what is the place of your desire?' and 'where do you breathe?'. While my personal walkscape illustrates how I make sense of the city and how I am able to transform it, it is the interactive part of the project – through the media of a postcard and a website – that reveals how to stimulate active exploration of the city.

The visual nature of the project takes urban space as its medium and responds to its contemporary visual culture. Urban space today is filled with posters, graffiti, graphics, GPS systems, mobile phones and other networking technologies, video surveillance monitored by governments and individuals, computer and video displays, etc. As such, physical urban space is overlaid with a multitude of informational layers – text, graphics, images and moving images – and can be called an 'augmented space'[24]. Consequently, urban space is not homogeneous, nor unified, but seems to work on disparate levels simultaneously; it seems schizophrenic and pregnant with 'other spaces' that remain possible[25]. This endows urban space with a desire – a desire to be elsewhere, of which the result is to be at more than one place at the same time. This desire can be considered an essential characteristic of urbanism's nomadic character: it is the catalyst for the walker and it is also what the project works with. By distributing images of other spaces in the city, these spaces are 'exotic' by their photographic nature and the medium of the postcard. However, by adding information about where the photos were taken and how one could go there (on the back of the postcard), they become simultaneously more 'attainable' and could lead to more than voyeuristic gazing. The images of my 'breathing spaces' are thus literally 'urbanised'; the 'exotic' is returned to the city and the images are placed in a contextual urban space that is thereby 'augmented', a space where image and reality coexist and can interact[26]. The image acts as an additional layer of intervention in the 'augmented' space of the city. Just like adding another layer of posters to the poster wall on the high street, the project aims at overlaying a new imaginational/informational space – not simply over a physical space, but over an 'augmented space' that is in itself already a layering of physical and 'informational' or virtual deposits. These virtual deposits do not necessarily need to be purely virtual as on the Internet; a postcard can attain a similar virtuality in the imaginary spaces it produces. As such, photography can be seen not as a closure of – or end point of – experience, but as a starting point for it. In this project I have tried to make imagery that stimulates urban exploration. As such the photographic project functions as an *alternative city guide* – alternative in that it involves guiding as equipping with a sensibility rather than as offering an exhaustive list for the user to process. The emphasis is not on forcing people to walk and explore the city, but rather on stimulating them to do so by portraying the city as a nomadic territory with open possibilities. By augmenting their do-it-yourself environment-awareness, the users can filter an urban space for what they want to experience in terms of their desire, and transform space mentally in dialogue with the flux of desire.

The project's website aspires to act as a laboratory for the experience of the city as walkscape. In the contemporary city, space, movement and information collide and the informational media become planning tools for architecture and urbanism[27]. As flyers become an urbanist's tool, the Internet can be used to

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24 See MANOVICH, Lev, "The Poetics of augmented space: learning from Prada", on website: www.manovich.net

25 or 'virtual' in Deleuzian/Bergsonian sense

26 See Manovich, Lev, Augmented Space, at: www.manovich.net

27 see ZOLLER, Doris, "The Temporary Private Zone – A new nomadic concept for urbanism", downloaded from: www template.com

28 TUTERS, Marc, "Geograffiti as the digital production of nomadic space", 17.09.2003, on: http://rixc.lv/txt/txt/.php?id=136&l=en

temporarily reorganise space. The project's website functions as a virtual territory where certain spaces are mapped, and from where exploration to these spaces can be organised. As a laboratory, the website does not allow for a virtual walk that replaces or represents the actual one, but forms a toolbox for the walkscapes that need to be created: it is an alternative city guidefor the urban landscape. The website allows for people to add their own spaces in the city to the map and propose them as possible field for exploration. This constitutes a user-defined cartography wherein one can inscribe onto the map – as an abstract two-dimensional evocation of space – a multitude of 'other' spaces. This virtual map permits users to inscribe urban space with their own shared or individual desires.

This user-defined cartography approaches the concept of geo-annotated information or 'geograffiti' , a practice that with the aid of GIS computers allows users to annotate personal information onto a digital map. The *wheredoyoubreathe.net* website can be seen as such a tool, be it potentially more widely accessible since it does not depend on the provision of hi-tech material such as GIS palms. Since the user can become co-author of the map and can add their own spatial imagination to it, the project recognises the individual as a 'producer of space' albeit initially mentally and experientially rather than physically. Space is created through the walks and by leaving traces of use on the website. The project thus proposes an authored sedimentation of spatial imagination with regards to the city. Indeed, by recording traces of use, it recognises authorship and creativity in the city as a multiple and distributed quality. By explicitly making urban space and the purely virtual space of the Internet interact, the website acts as an intensification of urban space: the virtual becomes a force that potentially re-shapes the physical. In the interaction between these two worlds, the project influences the behaviour of the conglomerate of materials and organisms that

the city is. This, I hope, constitutes one way of seeing photography as an interactive medium and interactive media as a form of DIY urbanism.

Postscript

This essay has tried to shed light on how the visual project *wheredoyoubreathe.net* sits within contemporary urban theory, and how it reflects on a number of issues within my practice as a photographer with an architectural background and a specific urban sensitivity. More concretely, it has attempted to clarify how exactly the city changes through the practice of walking, what the interplay is between the physical and the mental transformation of urban space involved in it, what the role of the image is – and more in particular my photographic images – within urban space, and finally why and how interactive visual media can serve as a tool to stimulate walking in the city.

The essay ultimately conveys the temporal nature of the project. The visual project has been developed over a period of five months during the spring and summer of 2004 in London, and this essay was written at the end of its production phase. Consequently, it could only reveal certain aspects about its nature, while others remain hidden until a later date. Now, one year after having produced the project, and a year after having left London, I have only been able to track certain fragments of its possible effects. Due to its nature, the project is in any case hard to assess: for, how could the experiential transformations of walking bodies be measured? Due to the limited distribution of postcards on which the website's accessibility depended, the user input on the website has been restricted. As such, this project should be seen as a test run for a more long-term, perhaps institutionally embedded project that would allow it to include new sensibilities, new landscapes and horizons.

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