REAL VIRTUALITY — WHO ARCHITECTS THE CITY?

Under the pressure of capitalism, we have come to acknowledge new agents and forces in the making of our built environment. In recent years, private players have taken over public infrastructure as a means of economic investment, from LinkNYC's WiFi kiosks to Google's waterfront development, thereby expanding their power from the virtual into the real. Similar to what architect and theorist Keller Easterling described as "internet in real space," the virtual begins to manifest in and influence our real world.

Global access to identical applications, datasets, and softwares, have in turn created identical environments, irrespective of geography. These imagined spaces base themselves on global phenomena, made possible by new social and technological formats, from online dating to robotic lawn mowers.

The omnipresence of these technologies has lead to homogeneity, resulting in the same objects, content, and contexts. At the same time, companies are now able to design the individual's experience of life and space by learning from mass data sets. The city therefore becomes seemingly "personalized" and increasingly homogenous at the same time. This can be read in parallel to what media theorists refer to as the filter bubble: the current state of our individual perception, directed by the other. To give an example: the principle behind Facebook —so called Homophily— is aimed at creating alike groups, which means Facebook as a technology emphasizes homogeneity.

Given the introduction of new types of actors, it's time to ask: who and what are the agents that can produce heterogeneity in a climate of corporate homogeneity? How would a space designed by and based on the principles of these social-technological phenomena look like? And how can we, as architects, engage with them?

ARCHITECTING HOMOGENEITY — THE COMPLEMENTARY PRINCIPLE

To approach this broad topic we will use social-technological phenomena as an entry point to speculate about the concrete effects of technology on a given site: Lech.

We will research, analyze and discuss the agencies of various socio-technological phenomena and their authors, and speculate on possible complementary elements that allow for more heterogeneity within the site.

Taking place in the year 2027, the design projects should envision realities that implement architecture and technology alternatively, producing a pseudo-realistic vision for a near-future society. Telling the story of environments we want to live in, our architectural designs aim to undo homogeneity, creating difference rather than sameness.

To address and communicate this vision, students will select a specific character from the future. This character will be the lens through which the architecture is designed, and will play a central role in the student's TV format.

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