

STUDIO ANTONAS

THE CABIN AND THE FIELD



ETH | FALL SEMESTER 2019 | INTRODUCTION: TUE 17.9 | 11:30

The cabin and the field

Introduction

The studio investigates a contemporary version of a cabin with an “extended bed” and a field understood as a different public realm. These two architectural conditions even if still unnamed, show already existing tensions of the social sphere produced while different relations occur between users and the network. The cabin and the field to be designed is also the design of oneself stabilized in front of the network. Both the cabin and the field in which it is included become increasingly visible while massive populations of different categories move, while people’s lives relate to shifting environments, and while people increasingly inhabit temporary spaces. They show two conditions related to this instability in a strange way; somehow they capture something stable in the realm of this instability; they crystallize body poses in front of the individual spectacles provided by the network.

Observation and provisory statement

The two conditions become evident as two positions: they capture the personal and the public relation to the infrastructure networks; experienced as different “desk positions” they oblige the human body to stand or sit or lay vis a vis to the living data sphere which is seen here as the core of the infrastructure; we can already call these 2 desc positions that offer views of the infrastructure “bed situations”. A “bed situation” captures in this sense a priority of humans to the infrastructure and its spectacles. Even while on the move, the situation of a pose in front of the data infrastructure remains stable as an invisible ever moving home. The body in bed is not any more only referring to a preparation of sleep or to a devotion to love; the bed represents an inoperative sufficiency receiving the individual body immobilized in front of the social sphere of the infrastructure, its commerce, its labor side and its sense of amusement. Furthermore the confusion between these different types of relation to the infrastructure produces a new passivity as an organized relation to infrastructure. Either “isolated” or “exposed to an exterior view” the subject of this culture of “individual spectacle”, is formed not only as the viewer but also as the actor performing in these two situations even if his performance seems to be mere passivity; the diptych of introvert bed cabin and exposed field not only organizes the simple architecture of the infrastructure but also the figure of its user. Living in studios of transmitters and receivers give the standard situations of minimal living today.

Both the individual and the exposed relation to the infrastructure, capture the immobility and inaction of what is seemingly under constant movement: in front of the eyes of a petrified user things move. Immaterial networks even if traditionally presented as freeing from the literal localities to which they apply created also a stable immaterial reference which substitute nowadays what was meant to be the character of a home country, a hospitable city and a home.

Intentions of the studio and tensions of the current social sphere

The aim of this workshop is to articulate the team position and some responses in relation to this description of the current social phenomena. Sociality is represented here as a function of isolated cabins in a common but uncanny social living room. This common field is also consumed as a space of the infrastructure. This social field functions as depending from the network and as an extension of it. It is named for the working hypothesis of this studio the “infrastructure village”; and the purpose of the “infrastructure village” is to install an imaginary relation with unexisting locations where humans find a meaning to spend their time. Related or not to “real” locations and pragmatic backgrounds, “Elsewhere” -a non-place beyond the bed-desc-position is proposed as the banality of this common field (where the exotic seems to play a significant normalizing role). Elsewhere is a key element for the structure of the post-network “cell of interconnected domesticity”. It is the ever transposed core of the cabin and the field; and this continuous transposition is viewed as a dramatic emptiness.

A study of the evolution of ‘modern domesticity’ in architecture, the meanings of its microscale and its expansions, will lead to a representation and transformations of the material studied. A few number of examples will lead the research. Domesticity had an important role in shaping modern architecture; the rationalization of the city is related to expansive forms of the domestic. Modern domestic settings drove to transformations of the urban landscape. A different domesticity can be presented as already forming city cells and common fields that push the urban phenomena to radical transformations. Formal, material and social experimentation touch the social and political imaginary that could shape a different urban reality. This shaping is not exempt from a certain theatricality. This study is organized both allegorically and literally, elaborating material in a practical and a theoretical level; it is introduced as an inhabitable set design where many performances can take place. The stability of the “infrastructure village” is so different from Aldo Rossi’s “scena fissa” (stable scene).

Focusing on two elements to be designed: the extended bed and the lost salon

The subject operating in the bed cabin we describe is the viewer, the handler and the sleeper in positions that are not easy to discern. The extended bed would then be the core of this cabin that can condense a minimum but luxury isolation in the infrastructure. It can be described as a recording studio and as a transmitter house where one can sleep and wake up in the position that guarantees and renews the user’s interest for staying more in front of the infrastructure.

The common area where this cabin opens replaces what was in the past the household’s living room but also, because of the autonomy of the cabin, it can first be read as an idiosyncratic desert. Following this description of the new user of the infrastructure, the lost salon of the past could organize a new public situation; we name lost salon the condition that occurs after the change of character of the traditional living room. The living room was meant to be the heart of the modern apartment. Its transformation to a space that cannot operate anymore as a center of a household is maybe the best description of a problem; the lost salon not only addresses a problem concerning the small scale of the house but affects in a mediated but already visible way the city’s public character. A narrative about this loss of the living room and the ghost forms it can populate anew the public sphere will be discussed in the course of the studio works.

The condition of inhabiting the infrastructure as a way of experiencing the everyday reflects to a physical experience of the body, and an unseen emptiness of the present empirical environment even if this is depending or not from any infrastructure elements. Different relations to different interactive spectacles of the infrastructure produce new systematic behaviors in relation to it; but these relations stay invisible. Even if the abstract character of a groundless cloud of applications seems to be exempt from local character (being visible by many different devices and from many

different places and seeming to free from the traditional experience of space) we follow in the studio an inverse rationale by interrogating what does this abstract dimension brings to the concrete one. What new attributes are projected through this primary mediation to what can be described as the “immediacy” of the personal cell of an interconnected infrastructure user; we focus upon the homely positions of an interconnected body both isolated and belonging in common platforms.

Bed system: isolation in the common sphere

Participation in common digital environments operated through networks organize a different infinity of the personal space of one's own. The characteristics of an isolated room can include today a multi-functioning bed described as follows.

1. Traditional use of the bed.
2. Relaxed Viewing situation, the cinema for one.
3. Interactive systems of receiving and transmitting. The video game principle.
4. Working online or offline.

We may say that some of these 4 categories interrelate one another being indiscernible and organizing what can be described today as urban sleep. Our interrogation is extended to the areas of the blurring between these categories since all of them create a node of a new type of urban sleep and inoperative immobility. The extended bed isolated situation is seen as a desk condition under investigation. It installs the position of a hypnotic residence in front of the infrastructure facilities. This position is organized as the possibility of hypnotic audio-visual experiences and sleep. A new hybrid position of a new inoperative laziness seems to organize a new homeostatic duration for human living that relies to the infrastructure sphere.

Beyond the extended bed

The lost salon brings us before an open question about the lost minimum sociality that joints every household. It is projected to the city as a loss. This loss seeks an urban replacement. The furniture of the living room are indicative of this missing part of the house; the furniture of the lost salon seek for substitutes in the city in relation to the networks too. An investigation about furniture becomes crucial for the description of the coming community.

The studio team acts as establishing personal positions about the future of such transformed sociality. A visionary and strong distortion of what we expect to structure the city of tomorrow has to be combined with an explanation of every different vision.

Research and Proposals

The studio will first research on issues and produce settings for extended beds included in more or less open cabins. Designing extended bed surfaces instead of homes is the first part of the research. In a second parallel level, a living common field of a larger scale is asked to be designed, in immediate relation to the individual cabins and with the possibility to host common activities of diverse kinds.

Experimental formats of presentation could include dioramas, animated drawings, models, videos, axos, and vector images and books including the produced material and texts.

After the choice of an existing semi - abandoned site a projection of the remarks will be done to complete the investigation. Finding a site is a first important research. The studio will provide such interesting sites in the cases that this is not easy for the participants.