Concept and Graphic design: **Renate Mihatsch**

with contributions by
Yasmine Abbas
Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson
Nikolaus Gansterer
Elke Krasny
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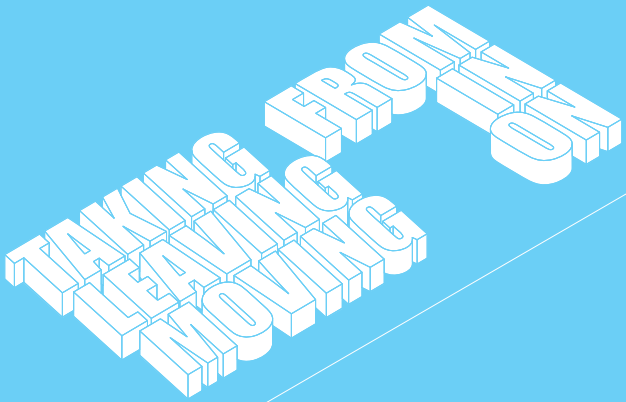
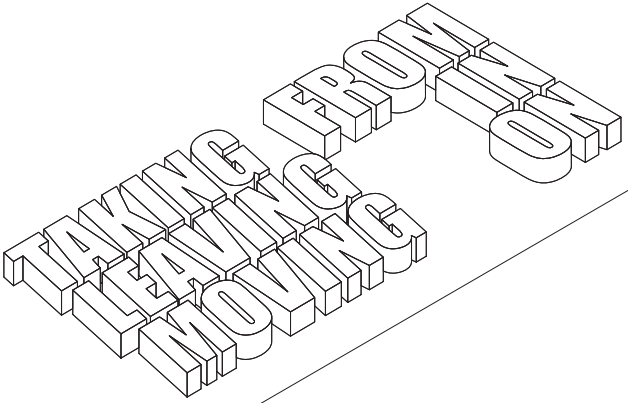
Anna Wachtmeister



mapping Urban Nomadism



mapping Urban Nomadism

Diplomarbeit von Renate Mihatsch
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Renate Mihatsch

INTRODUCTION

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Numbers of mobility – We are statistics

Many people are on the move. In motion. Not necessarily physically, also virtually: people head to the metropolis, hit the road, take to the skies and surf the net. It seems that being part of the flow has become a normality for a growing portion of the world's population and sedentariness more rare than before. The momentum of this stream carries people away, sometimes whether they want to be pushed or not. Although international migration is mostly "voluntary", insofar as most people do not fit the official criteria for being refugees, the force of necessity operates at diverse levels. People flee for many reasons, and have to fear deportation. Statistics try hard to capture all kinds of motion, to freeze the flow at least on paper. The collection of certain data reveals that regressions in physical movements are also evident:

'Nearly **200** million people or **3%** of the world population live outside their countries of birth. Current migration flows, relative to population, are weaker than those of the last decades of the **19th** century.'[1] – Against expected tendencies of mobility 'international tourist arrivals for business, leisure and other purposes are estimated to have declined worldwide by **4%** in **2009** to **880** million. Only Africa could mark a growth by **5%**.'[2] – 'Worldwide airport passenger numbers dropped by **1.8%** in **2009** to **4.796** billion, from a high of **4.882** billion in **2008**.'[3] – 'The peak day of flights in Europe in **2009** was **26th** of June with **31.434** flights.'[4] – 'In Johannesburg, the **12.500** privately run mini-taxis are used by **20%** of all trips to work, with **40%** still done by foot.'[5] – In **1935**, Phyllis Pearsall started mapping London to create the first *A to Z street atlas*. She worked **18** hours per day to walk all **23.000** streets of the city, which covered a distance of about **5.000** kilometers / **3.000** miles.[6] – 'Prior to the first world war, mail was delivered in Berlin **11** times per day. Between **1920** and **1940** it was only **3** times. Currently, post is only delivered once every weekday.'[7] – On Monday **26th** of June **2010** at **8pm** (GMT +**3**) **19.805.195** people were online on *Skype*.

When numbers reach a certain point they can also mark new eras, figures are used as evidence to highlight a tendency. Publications and articles about global urbanization often include sentences such as: 'Since **2006**, the majority of the world's population live in urban agglomerations rather than in rural areas.'[8] The information is repetitive and just varies in its formulation. *Majority* is replaced with *half of* or *more than* **50%**. But sometimes it seems not just to be a question of which synonym to use but which "randomly" generated number to paste: population of Caracas **5.930.000**[9] or *Metropolitan District of Caracas* **3.196.514**[10]. Assuming that about half of Caracas' population lives in informal settlements (barrios) explains perhaps also the different numbers of inhabitants. Another example is the predicted number of future environmental migrants: persons who leave their habitual homes because of climate change-related reasons. The estimate ranges from **50** million to **1** billion people by the middle of the century.[11] Knowing that each figure has its own truth, it is often hard to find out which algorithm was used for the calculation.

We are surrounded by an enormous amount of numbers and information, all of which try to explain the complexity of the world. Everything seems to be linked and to be part of a network that covers the whole globe. Even our bodies slowly turn into diagrams. Our movements and actions are observed and controlled. Everywhere we leave traces, with our cell phones, credit cards, passports, on CCTV tapes and in the internet. Databases are continuously updated with new information defining the immaterial bodies more closely. These bodies seem to be quite talkative and provide information about buying patterns, past and present positions, social networks etc. We are tightly enmeshed in the rhizomatic structure of the world.

Reading and editing the city

'The city became a book in my hands, into which I hurriedly glanced a few last times.'[12] (Benjamin about leaving Marseille)

Cities, too, are enormous pools of data, the latter to be found in the air, on house façades, in the streets, within movements, structures and organization systems, through people and objects. The information stored by a city accumulates over centuries to become a dense space of memory. Karl Schlögl claims that 'encounters with anywhich city are always something like a reading-backwards of petrification.'[13]

Not everybody has the same authorization to probe the archived

knowledge of the city, the same access to urban life, the same 'right to the city'[14]. Urban space is partly encoded and password-saved. People are kept out of, or kept in, certain areas. Not reading the information held in urban space is not just a problem of segregation but also of awareness, and reading the information is not about control but about understanding one's surroundings. There are many tiny things, often overlooked, which can tell a lot about global movements and urban structuring: cracks in the asphalt which are like scars on the skin; codes, like street names; and house numbers or house names and street numbers; surveillance systems; pretended garbage on the ground; the sound level and the smell of the city; and much more. Citizens just have to be curious and observant and start reading, with all their senses. 'To what erotics of knowledge does the ecstasy of reading such a cosmos belong? Having taken a voluptuous pleasure in it, I wonder what is the source of this pleasure of *seeing the whole*, of looking down on, totalizing the most immoderate of human texts'[15], Michel De Certeau writes about experiencing New York City and Karl Schlögl claims that reading a city is like 'explorations without guaranty'[16]. You will never know exactly what you will find.

Taking FROM Leaving IN Moving ON presents certain discoveries in the fields of mobility, neo nomadism and urbanism. The book's basic archive consists of eight contributions by international artists, architects, musicians, and cultural and urban theorists. They present some of their personal discoveries through photos, dialogues, graphics and text. Elke Krasny, for example, discloses her photo archive of small papers and stickers found on columns and house walls. Nikolaus Gansterer flips open some of his sketchbooks and Bernardo Risquez visualizes patterns of rhythmic movements. The book starts to be a small collection but it should expand continuously, within the book and also into urban space. Everybody is invited to add their own experiences, (critical) statements, notes and drawings. Pack your toolbox with pencil and eraser, photo and video cameras, cardboard and Stanley knife, keyboard and mouse. Start to become an explorer. Start decoding the encrypted environment. 'The observer himself should play an active role in perceiving the world and have a creative part in developing his image.'[17]

The text of the city is not static but changeable. It is editable by its citizens, who can modify or make up a completely new story. City dwellers turn into 'reading-authors'[18], who interact with the text so that it becomes their own. New stories are generated continuously, unique in time and space. Each promenade through the city constitutes its own personal narrative. Each junction asks for the decision: With which chapter should the story go on? 'Strolling is a kind of reading of the streets, whereby peoples' faces, window displays, shop fronts, café terraces, tracks, cars, trees all become like alphabet-letters of equal importance, and which together result in the words, sentences and pages of a book, ever-new. In order to stroll properly, one must not have anything too specific planned.'[19] But the paths of reading do not end with the borderline of a city, country or the page of a book. They continue in the imagination, like the promenades of Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson, which can be found in this book. Paths in the city become trains of thought and vice versa. They create each other and become an endless story.

In transition

Determinedly we fly, drive and run around the globe. Navigation systems do help us to find the right and most efficient way. They have left the cockpits of airplanes and have become a tool for urban dwellers (see contribution by Tobias Moorstedt). But it is not just this

one technology developed for fighter jets, which has found its way from the world of aviation into the city. The cartographer Philippe Rekacewicz claims: 'The way airport authorities (with the complicity of governments) treat passengers may be seen as a model for the way government authorities may let their citizens be treated in their daily public spaces.'[20] Airports are spaces of dense surveillance and control to create 'movement patterns of bodies, information and money'[21] to act economically efficiently and to "improve" security-political measures. They can be understood as test areas, places with strict requirements, bans and rules, but – more importantly – without privacy, to test out how much control can be wrested away from an individual.

– STOP!

Airport Lab. The test area *Airport* is divided in laboratories. Everybody who has bought an airline ticket will have automatically accepted to be a participant for the experiment. The traveling bodies become sources for filling biometric data bases with finger prints, palm prints, iris patterns and face images. Furthermore, the laboratories focus on consumption as a research interest. Its *Duty Free* department covers large areas of the complex. The results of the experiments are collected, interpreted and structured to generate immaterial clones of the bodies in transit. Each bodyscan, each purchase sharpens these copies. Side effects: very likely! Not just the physical body starts to travel at the airport but also the immaterial clones jump into the data flow and nothing seems to be static.

GO! –

The liquidation spreads continuously, along with our being a part of it and becoming abstractions of ourselves. Step by step we adapt to the process and the rising control of migrational and money flows do not necessarily change our movement. Mobile lifestyles, however, can also be interpreted differently, where non-spaces such as airports and train stations are not places of mobility but sedentariness. Hajo Eickhoff claims: 'Modern nomadism reveals itself as an extreme form of sedentariness [...] On-the-moveness is a poverty of movement and a stasis. Feet and torso are immobile, as if they were seated on a stage, behind which backdrops are constantly being shuffled, intimating ever-new places, where they will meet up with ever-new people.'[22] According to Eickhoff, it is the chair which is an icon of modern nomadism. Airports, where waiting is one of the main activities, have enormously big seating areas, including coffee shops and restaurants. Also the interior of planes, trains and cars are dominated by the objectified chair. Designing these spaces has a lot to do with arranging chairs as space-efficiently as possible. But it is also the shape that matters and the comfort or discomfort it tries to convey. *The City Night Line* of the *Deutsche Bahn* for example is provided with reclining seats – the 'cheapest comfort class'[23] for overnight travel. They look like capsules, and it is not clear, if this shape has anything to do with sitting more comfortably, feeling more intimate, or just looking different. (My own experience says: Sleeping? Impossible!).

Sedentariness and nomadism can not be seen as a pair of opposites. It is much more complex than just being this or that. Moving is not necessarily to do with muscular effort, and sitting does not exclude moving. Often just waiting to be moved while seated is not enough movement so that airports, trains and bus lines offer internet access so as to provide virtual mobility. Laptops become our best travel buddies with whom all experiences can be shared, and thanks to them waiting times in physical standstill can be bridged. (see contribution by Michael Langeder). Already in 1997 Paolo Bianchi wrote about the esthetic of traveling: 'The lifestyle of a young Nomadic-Art-Generation in the Global Village is characterized by either a life fed from the cable or lived out of a suitcase.'[24]

Behind

'Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.'[25]

The first three paragraphs of the introduction do not want to reveal new approaches to urban nomadism nor define the word itself (see contribution by Yasmine Abbas for definitions). I am neither a writer, nor a theorist. I tried to order and disclose some of my personal, collected information, thoughts, fascinations and worries about increasing mobilization.

Over the period of working on this book my pretended mobile lifestyle, which I thought I was aiming for, became more localized. Ironically, it was the work on the book, which rooted me to one place. However, the more I read about mobility the less my surroundings appeared static anymore. Movement was everywhere. Apparently the most obvious repercussion of digging into any topic is, that everything becomes part of it. All things started to flow and the terms *nomadism* and *mobility* did not concretize but instead became liquid in my hands. – The city has become a book, the book a city – sitting has become moving, moving sitting – walking has become reading, reading walking – territory has become a map, the map a territory. – In order to trap and visualize some of the flows that surround us, mapping seemed to be the right method. 'The map is a graphical representation which suggests or facilitates a spatial understanding of objects, concepts, processes and events in the (human) world.'[26]

Starting with the concept that the book should map urban nomadism, it automatically happened that the book turned into territory itself. The contributions, my graphical interpretation of them, and the book with its dimensions and pages, all merged. The borders started to blur and a new space formed which can be discovered in different ways. When people walk in a city they sometimes take the straight line guided by navigation systems, they stroll without an aim, or they intentionally make a detour to find new relations and put a street into context. The methods, which are adopted to explore urban space – I suggest – should be translated into reading this book's space. The contributions range from essays and photos, to drawings and graphics. All are represented differently, therefore a continuous rhythm for exploring the book does not exist. It is not possible, then, just to set the cruise control and speed straight through. The space might appear confusing, but there are navigation systems, which should assist in not getting completely lost. Still, if things happen to end up off the beaten track, there is the chance of stumbling upon something previously overlooked (see contribution by Anna Wachtmeister).

Manual

In addition to conventional page numbers, this book has an alternative navigation system, one that suggests other reading paths. It is a content-based orientation system, where short excerpts become direction signs. The book starts with a collection of quotes including page codes and arrows, which mark possible ways for how to continue the exploration of the territory. In following one path at the beginning, another will always be crossed, a quote sign pointing to a direction other than just straight to the next page. The participants of this book have chosen some of these markers, others are added associatively from my personal archive of mobility sources. They refer to the content of the contributions and try to link them with one another. The suggested non-linear reading paths should offer an alternative to the conventional order of the bound book. Therefore the pages can be ripped off and be rearranged to a plan display. Removing the pages reveals additional information. The contribution of

Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson, for example is printed on the inner pages. Their dialogue can only be read when it is removed from the Japanese-bound book, otherwise it is represented by a map of coffee cups. Elke Krasny's essay is also printed on the inside of the pages, where the book has to be destroyed to disclose it. The book is an object to use and not to store, an object to discover and explore, to be deconstructed and rearranged.

This small booklet continues with brief abstracts of all contributions and assembly plans of all eight maps. The manuals show just one possibility of how to arrange the single pages. But these can also leave the collection and start to travel and be relinked into new contexts. Not just the stickers of Elke Krasny's contribution can be brought into urban space but also the pages themselves can end up in the city. Either by accident, because the pages have become loose inserts which can easily fall out of the book, or on purpose, because they are placed somewhere so as to leave a message.

This book's space is a territory in which to get lost, or simply, perhaps, for losing.

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3 **Airport Council International:** *ACI's World Airport Traffic Report for 2009.* http://www.aci.aero/cda/aci_common/display/main/aci_content07_c.jsp?zn=aci&cp=1-6-43-3647^2003_666_2__
4 **Eurocontrol:** *Eurocontrol Annual Report 09.* http://www.eurocontrol.int/epr/gallery/content/public/docs/AR_2009.pdf
5 **Budett, R. and D. Sudjic** (Ed.) 2007. *The Endless City.* New York: Phaidon Press
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7 **Heine E.** 2004. *Der neue Nomade. Ketzerische Prognosen.* Munich: Btb Verlag (translation of quote Antonia Pont)
8 Ibid. 4
9 **Brillembourg, A., K. Feireiss and H. Klumpner** (Ed.) 2005. *Informal City. Caracas Case.* Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel Verlag. - The source and used definition of Caracas' population is not clarified in the publication.
10 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caracas. (‘*El Distrito Metropolitano de Caracas* (Metropolitan District of Caracas) includes the *Distrito Capital* (the capital city proper) and four other municipalities in Miranda State including Chacao, Baruta, Sucre, and El Hatillo.’) Also on Wikipedia, two different numbers are used for Caracas' population: one is defined with *Metropolitan District*, the other with *Metropolitan Area*. The footnotes of both numbers lead to dead links. The german Wikipedia entry says urban agglomeration (Ballungsraum): 3.786.553 (no source mentioned) The number is nearly congruent with the number for Caracas' urban agglomeration according to the United Nations: 3.051.000 (2009) http://esa.un.org/wup2009/unup/index.asp?panel=2
11 **United Nations Population Fund:** *State of World Population 2009.* http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2009/en/pdf/EN_SOWP09.pdf
12 **Benjamin, W.** ‘One Way Street’ in: Bullock M. and Jennings M. (Ed.) 2002. *Selected Writings. Volume 1.* 1913-1926. Harvard: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press
13 **Schlögl, K.** 2006. *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit. Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik.* Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch (translation of quote Antonia Pont)
14 **David Harvey** claims ‘The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city.’ http://www.newleftreview.org/?view=2740
15 **De Certeau, M.** 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Los Angeles: University of California Press
16 Ibid. 13
17 **Lynch, K.** 1960. *The Image of the City.* Massachussetts and London: The M.I.T Press, Cambridge
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21 **Fuller, G.** ‘Körper-Scanner. Die neuen Ränder des vernetzten Lebens’ in *Arch+* March. 2009
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23 http://www.bahn.de/citynightline/view/mdb/citynightline/city_night_line_neu/info_buchung/MDB79387-brosch_0910_gb_final.pdf
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25 **Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari** 2004. *A Thousand Plateaus.* London: Continuum
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THE LIFE-LIVE-RADAR
Tobias Moorstedt

Tobias Moorstedt's essay examines how modern, urban nomads navigate the city and the globe with the help of information technology – to be *on the road* always means to be *on the screen* of our satnav and *Google Maps*. Our ancestors used to gaze to the sky, determining the ideal route by the ways of the sun and the polar star. In the 21st century, we look down on our little gadgets but still, the information comes from above (GPS satellites circling planet earth). Digital technology transforms the city to a sensual entity, one that seems to develop a sense for our direction and needs. The essay 'Life-Live-Radar' demonstrates the increasing importance of one's location in a hyperlocal age. The scary question then arises: Does living mean tracing and being tracked all the time?

PROMENADES: URBAN IMAGINARIES, REINVENTING *OUR* CITIES AND [SEARCHING FOR] A SENSE OF HOME
Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson

The personal conversation between Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson is about how a sense of home is constructed and how *our* cities become a collage of past, present and to-be experiences, relationships and practices. This conversation was started in one city, developed in others, and continues growing.
Drinking coffee in paper, plastic or "real" cups, on the street or in cafés guides Anne-Laure Fayard's and Aileen Wilson's urban promenades. For the visual interpretation of the essay, Renate Mihatsch has focused on drinking coffee as an activity that helps to root and connect with people in new places. The word *coffee* is used over 100 times during the conversation. Each time a different coffee cup represents the word on the backside of the page and transforms the text into a map.

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THE CHRONICLES OF DIRK
UNFOLD
Michael Langeder

The two contributions by Michael Langeder both display the relationship of a human to his computer. 'The Chronicles of Dirk' tells a story where a machine becomes a personalized being, a fast companion called Dirk, who turns out to be more than a mere object. They share space and time to a point where Dirk starts to memorize better than his human friend. 'Unfold' reveals parts of this simply structured and categorized memory. A conventional digital archive of backed-up and sourced-out data, it shows the limits of sorting, linking and memorizing captured knowledge: a personal, immaterial and invaluable collection.

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Bernardo Risquez

Bernardo Risquez' contribution is an abstract interpretation of nomadism, where moments are seen as the smallest experience of transition. The contribution is a manual for composing a complex pattern, one which visualizes random events in space at a certain moment.

ST(R)AYING OFF THE MAP
THE ABSENCE OF A MAP
Anna Wachtmeister

The interview with Anna Wachtmeister was composed over a period of six months in a ping-pong email exchange with Renate Mihatsch, where interviewer and interviewee both shaped the questions. The final result, which keeps the structure of a typical interview, is disclosed in this book.
The interview describes a self-chosen migration as life- and work-style and a method of accessing different layers of cities. Anna Wachtmeister talks about how she ended up living in Erbil, capital of Iraqi Kurdistan; the role that maps play there; how people navigate Erbil; and how she maps her various places of residence. The focus of the interview lies on the absence of cartographical material and how this can influence urban perception.

NEO-NOMAD DICTIONARY
Yasmine Abbas

Fifteen terms and short definitions form the 'Neo-Nomad Dictionary'. Yasmine Abbas' personal selection and interpretations of how urban nomads might experience the world should help in understanding the methods, conditions, spaces and tools of mobile dwellers (digital, mental and physical). Each term should not be viewed in isolation but is often strongly linked to the others in the sense akin to analog hypertexting as a 'method of associations information and concepts' (Neo-Nomad Dictionary definition).

AUTHORS

Yasmine Abbas (http://blog.neo-nomad.net)
is a French architect, holding a Master of Science in Architecture Studies from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Doctorate of Design from Harvard University Graduate School of Design. She is the founding director of Pan Urban Intelligence, a network of urban intelligence consultants who deliver people-informed research and design strategy for the built environment.

Anne-Laure Fayard (http://www.bazartropicando.com/alfwebsite/index.html) and **Aileen Wilson** (http://www.aileenwilson.com)
is a Franco-Swiss-Scottish artist-duo. Their last collaboration produced 'building_space_with_words', an interactive multimedia installation, which investigated the relationship between physical and virtual space. Anne-Laure Fayard is Assistant Professor of Management in the Department of Technology Management, NYU-Poly. Aileen Wilson is Associate Professor of Art and Design Education at the Pratt Institute, New York.

Nikolaus Gansterer (http://www.gansterer.org)
is an Austrian artist, whose visual work deals with mapping processes of invisibility, often also in the context of performative acts. In his installation works, Gansterer focuses on the translation of processes emerging out of cultural and scientific networks. In the last years he has had residencies in the Netherlands, China and Belgium. Currently he is also teaching at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna.

Elke Krasny (http://www.elkekrasny.at)
is cultural theorist, curator, author and teaching at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. Her focus lies on art, architecture and urbanism of the 20th and 21st century. Two of her last books are *Urbanografien - Stadtforschung in Kunst, Architektur und Theorie* (Reimer. 2008) and *Other Places - Vienna Lerchenferder Street* (Turia + Kant. 2010). The first she edited together with Irene Nierhaus, the second with Angela Heide.

Michael Langeder (http://www.michaellangeder.com)
is an Austrian architect, multimedia artist and musician. Currently, he is living and working in Brussels/Belgium. His work deals with temporary architecture, public space, dérive, everyday life and the night. His project 'disturbed city' was recently published in *dare magazine* and is part of the *Vague Terrain 13: citySCENE* online publication.

Renate Mihatsch
is an Austrian artist. Her work lies in the intermediate field of art, architecture, urbanism and graphic design, for which she is using and misusing the tools of each discipline. The projects are mainly resulting from intense analyses of urban, public and semi-public spaces. Having lived in Venezuela and Spain, she is currently based in Vienna/Austria, where she has started her second study of Transmedia Art at the University of Applied Arts.

Tobias Moorstedt (http://www.nansenundpiccard.de)
is author and independent journalist. He has worked for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung, Spiegel, der Standard* and *ARTE*, among others. His last books are *Jeffersons Erbe. Wie die digitalen Medien die Politik verändern* (Suhrhamp. 2008) and *Das Jetzikon. 50 Kultobjekte der Nullerjahre* (Rohwohlt-Taschen-Verlag. 2009).

Bernardo Risquez (http://www.bernardorisquez.com)
is a Venezuelan architect and musician. His work deals with audiovisual representation and urban rhythmic patterns that could define cities, cultures and help understand how-what-where we are. In 2010, Michael Langeder and Bernardo Risquez founded the music label 'Different Fountains'.

Anna Wachtmeister (anna.wachtmeister@gmail.com)
is a Swedish architecture-educated urban development practitioner, who has worked as an architectural designer in Europe; at the UNHABITAT in Nairobi; for the GTZ in the informal settlements of Cairo; and for the Urban-Think Tank in Caracas. In Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, she managed humanitarian projects for a Swedish NGO. Recently, she completed her assignment for the UNESCO managed project for 'The Revitalisation of Erbil Citadel'.

Colophon

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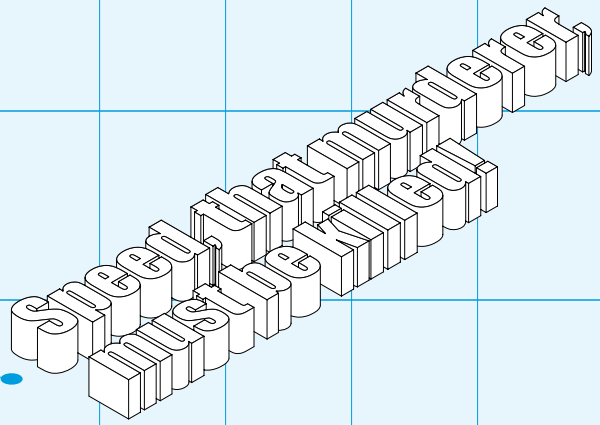

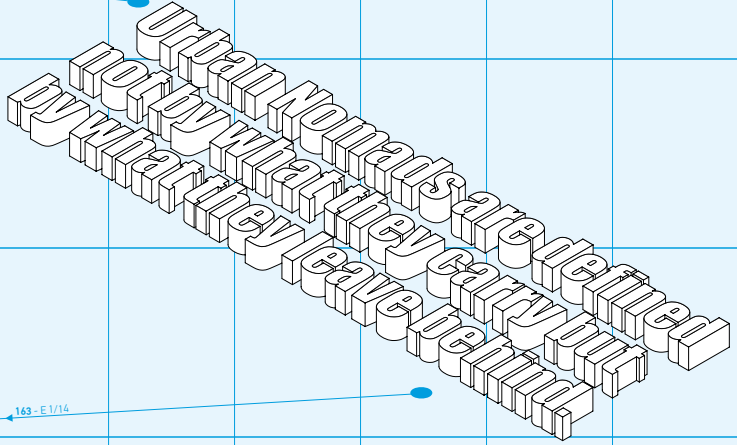

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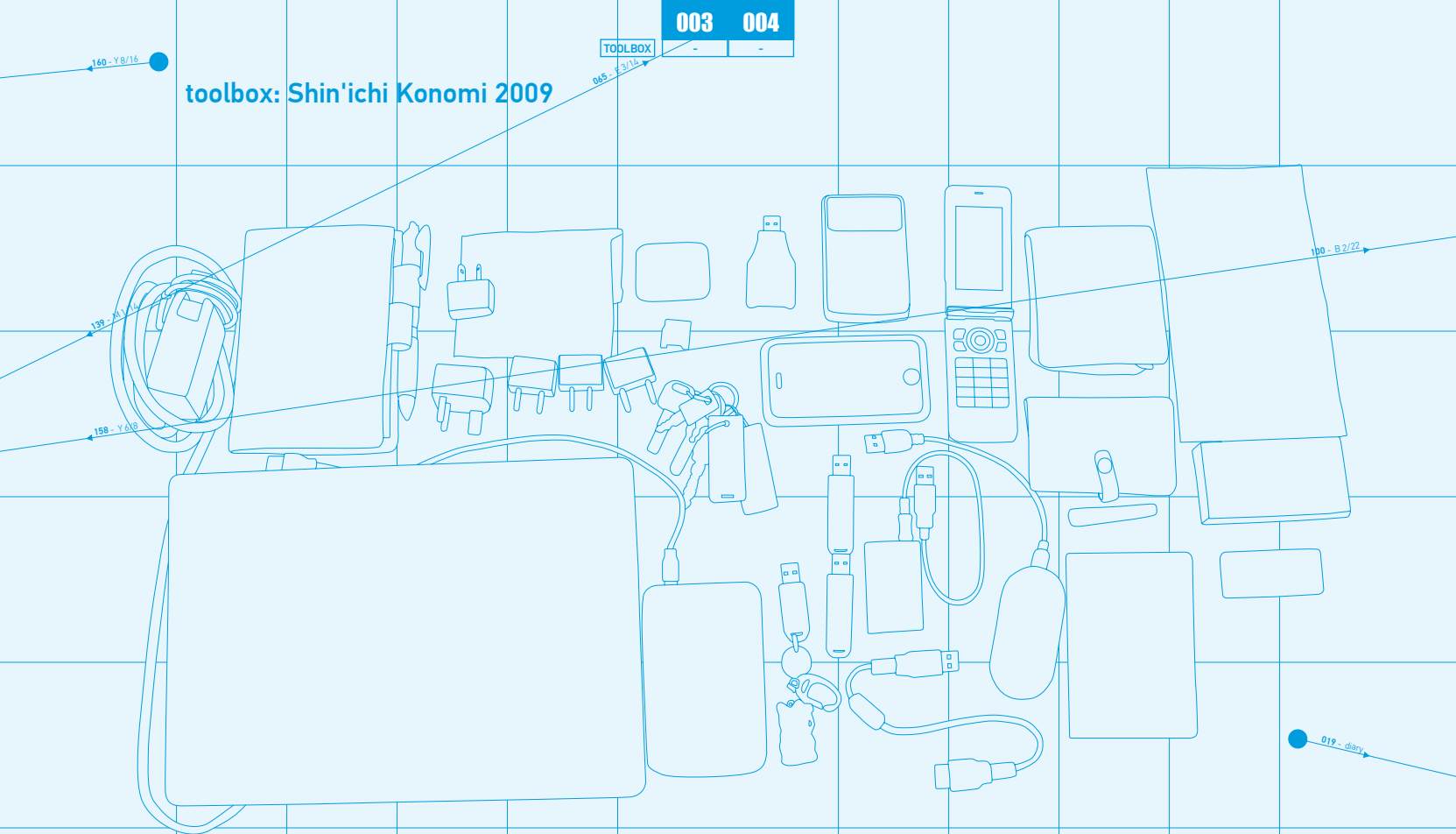
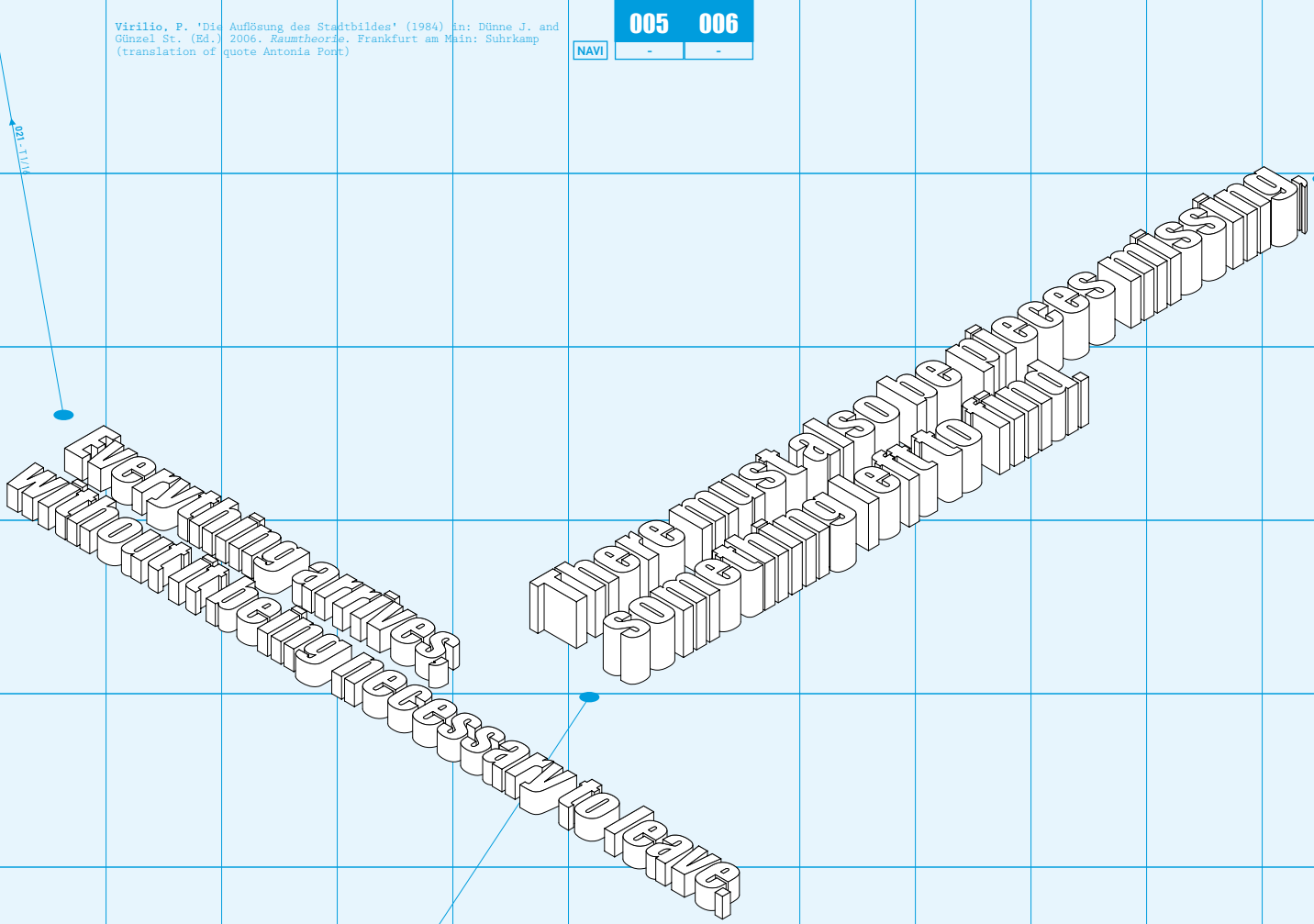
toolbox: Shin'ichi Konomi 2009



Several years ago, I lost most of my important material belongings. This included passports, credit cards, ID cards, driver's license, and so on. I have also lost my important personal data multiple times due to hard drive crashes and PC theft. These experiences were terrible, however, they also came with a slight taste of refreshing relief. I wonder how I might feel or have felt about such losses if my lifestyle were less nomadic.

Virilio, P. 'Die Auflösung des Stadtbildes' (1984) in: Dünne J. and Günzel St. (Ed.) 2006. *Raumtheorie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp (translation of quote Antonia Pont)

021 - T1/14



077 - D1/4

139 - M1/14

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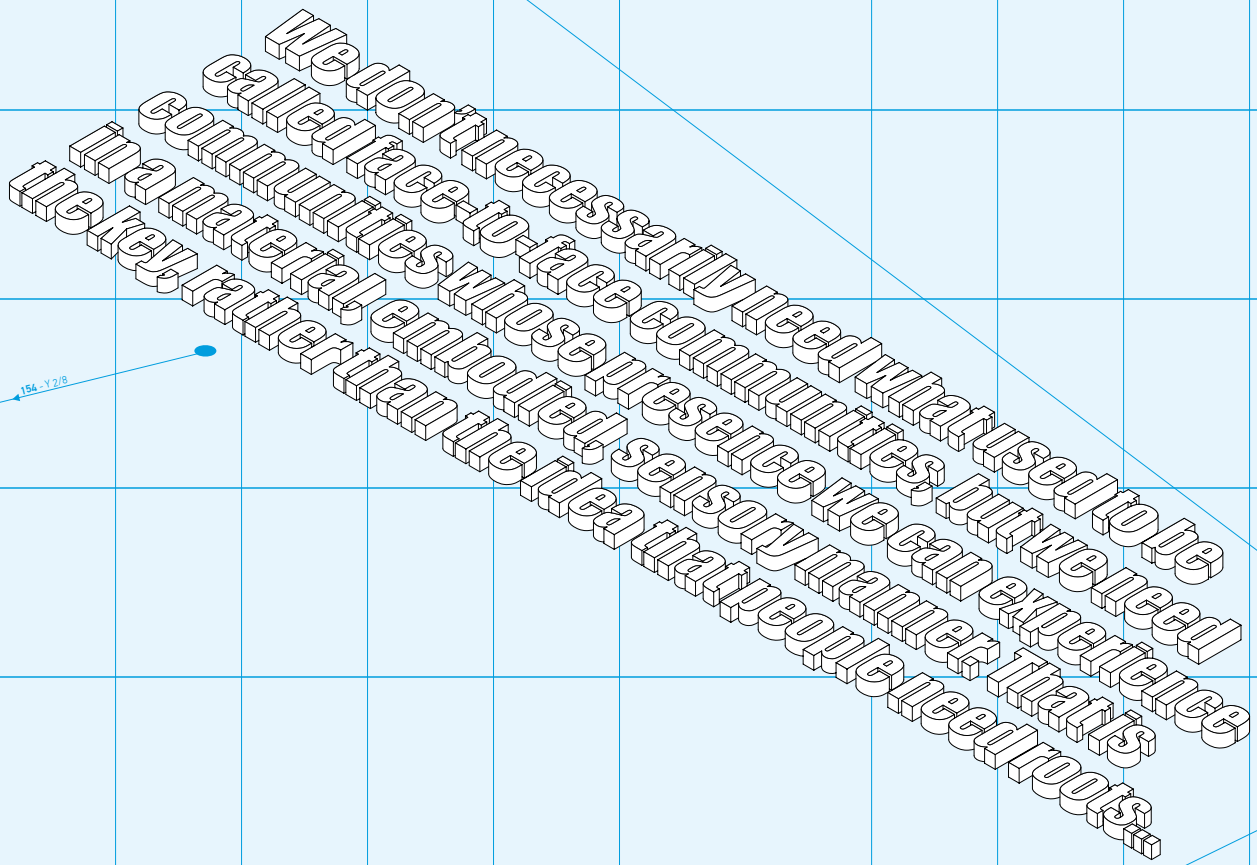
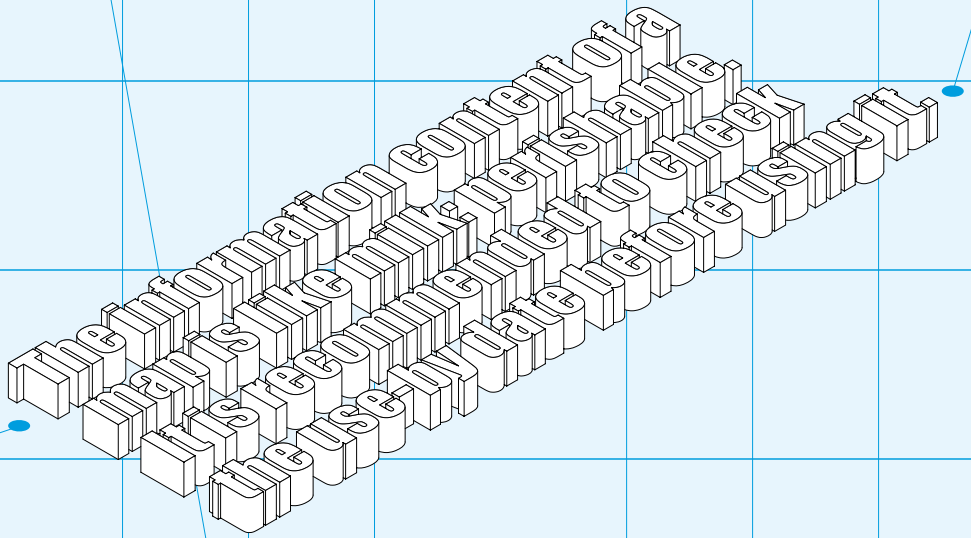
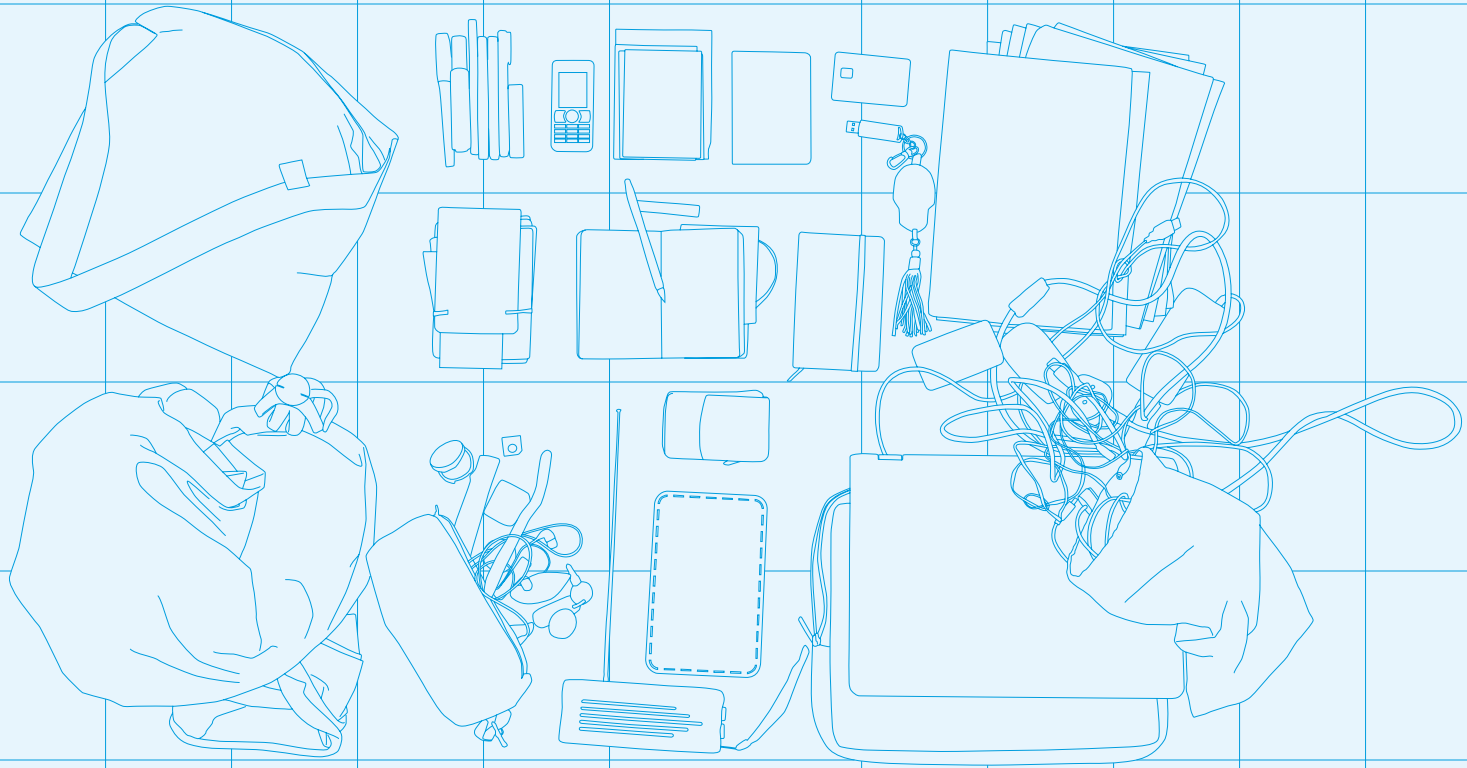


quote chosen by Yasmine Abbas
Appadurai, A. 'The Right to Participate in the Work of the Imagination' interviewed by Arjen Mulder in *Transurbanism*: 33-47. Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/NAI Publishers. 2002. p. 34

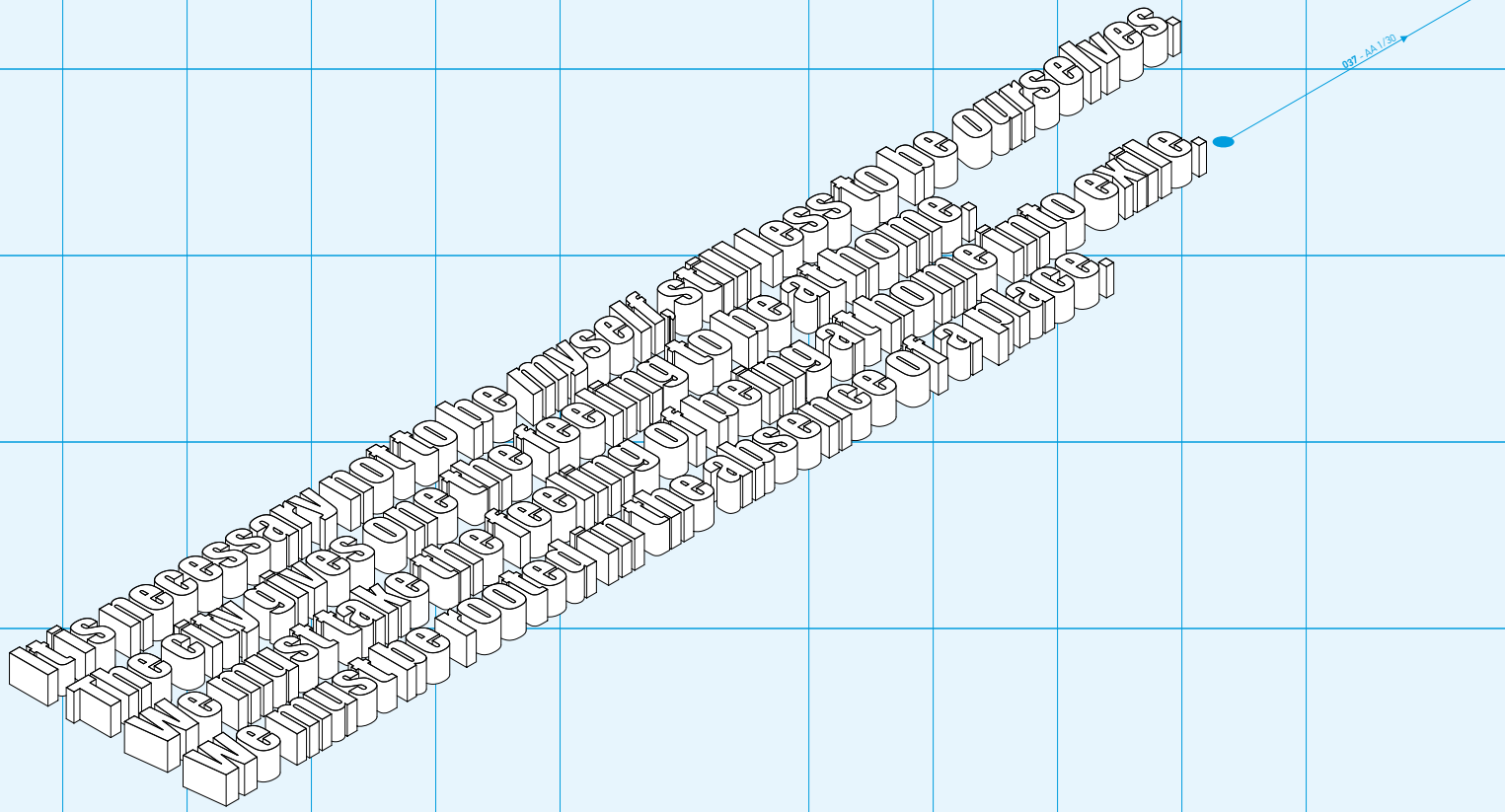


Monmonier, M. *Eins zu einer Million. Die Tricks und Lügen der Kartographen* (1996) quoted in: Schlögel K. 2006. *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit.* Frankfurt am Main: Fischer (translation of quote Antonia Pont)

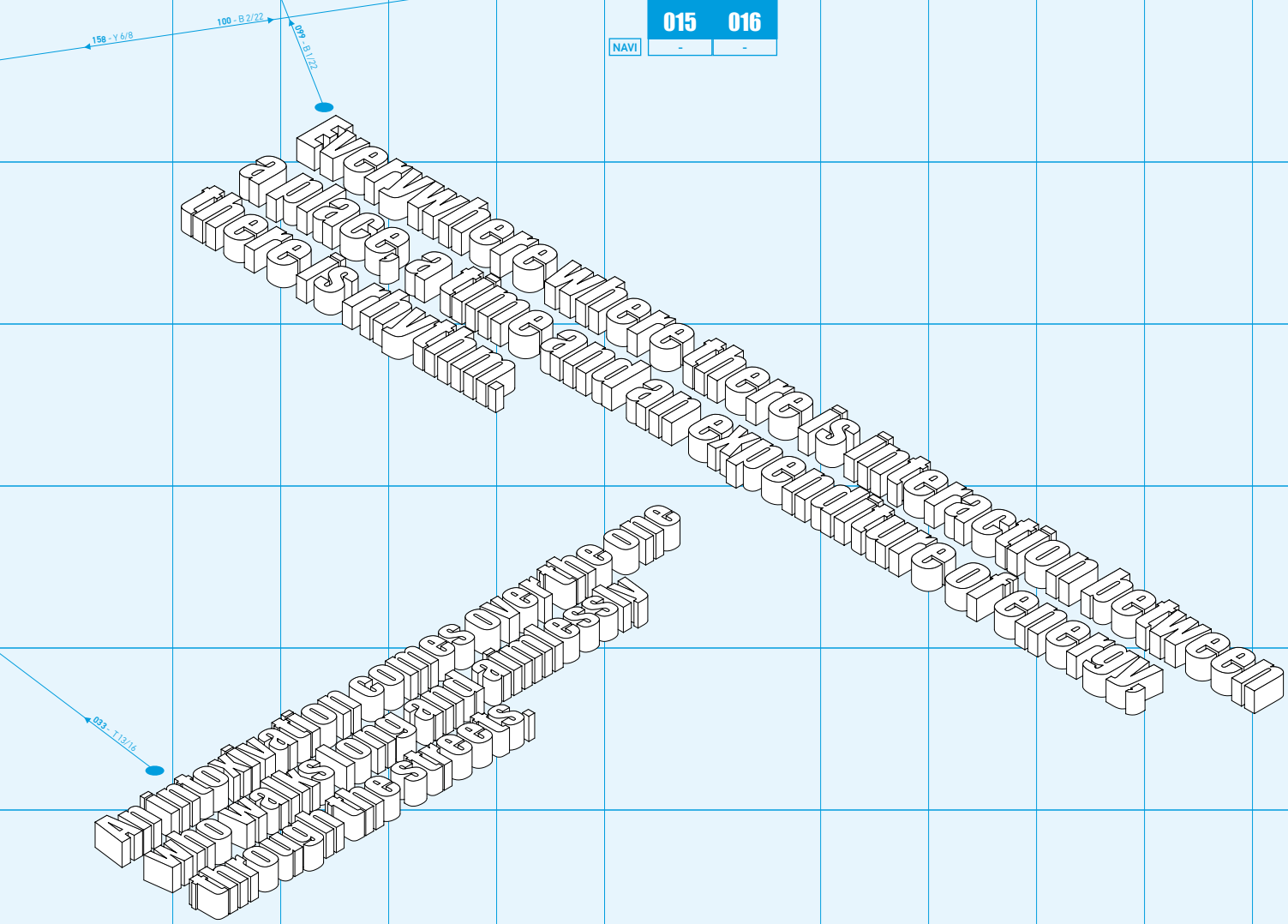
toolbox: Anna Wachtmeister 2009



The two toolboxes are results from a questioner about urban nomadism done in 2009 by Renate Mihatsch.



quote chosen by Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson
Weil, S. quoted in: Iyer P. 2001. *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing



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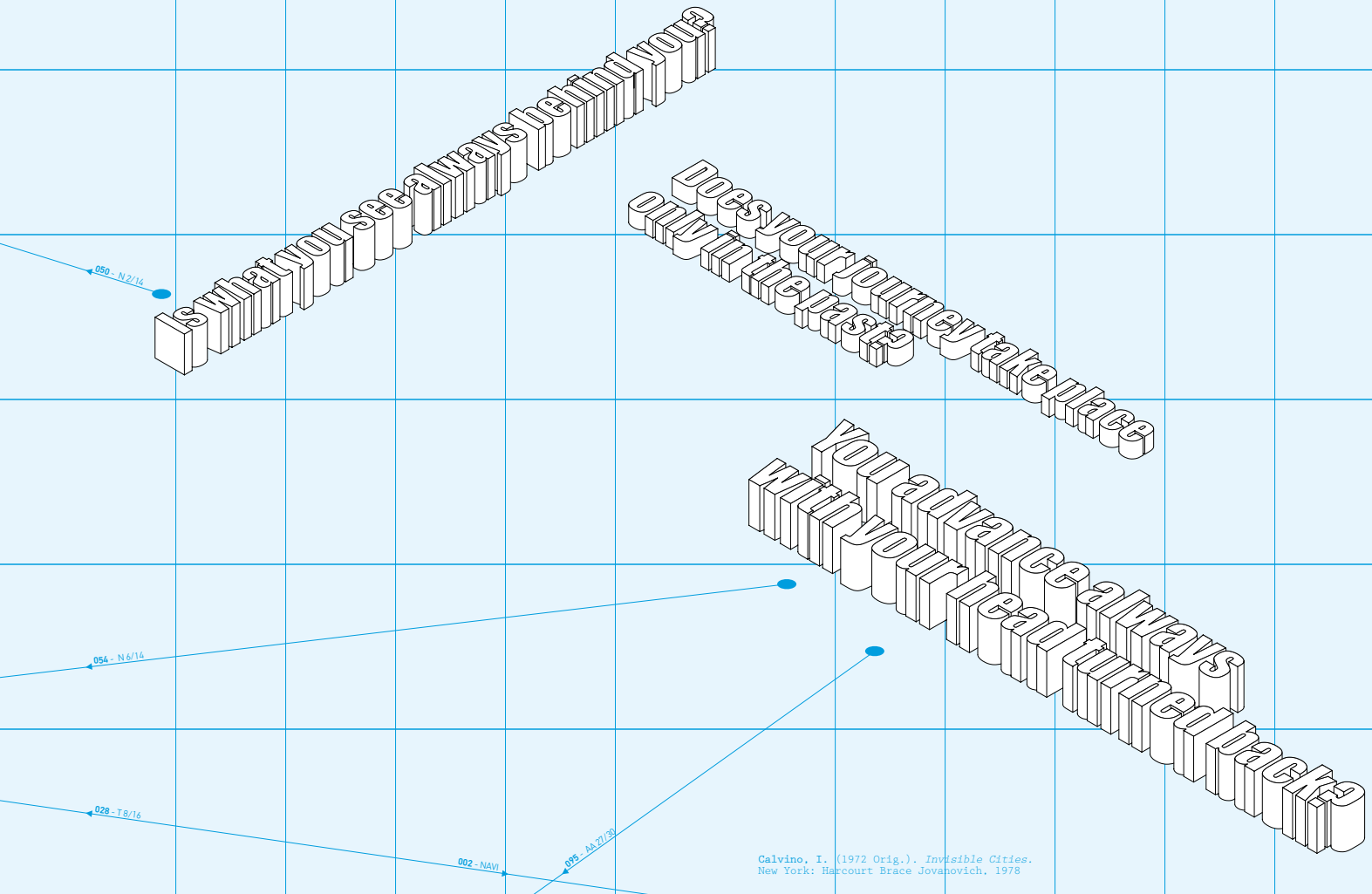


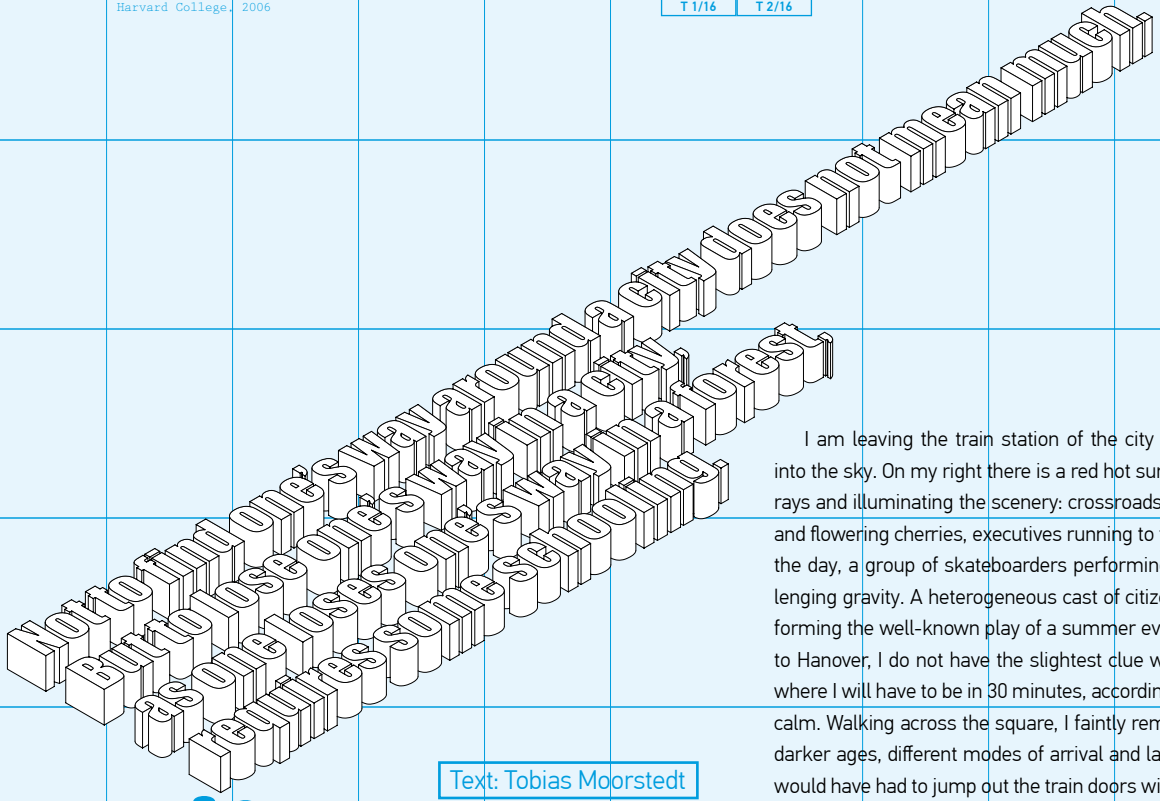
Calvino, I. (1972 Orig.). *Invisible Cities.*
New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978

Shin'ichi Konomin 2006.6.20 - 2009.9.19

120 days Tokyo [889 km ✈] 3 days Seoul [1158 km ✈] 32 days Tokyo [1158 km ✈] 4 days Kyoto [372 km 🚆] 135 days Tokyo [372 km 🚆] 6 days San Jose [8340 km ✈] 100 days Tokyo [8340 km ✈] 3 days Fukuoka [889 km ✈] 5 days Hong Kong [2028 km ✈] 25 days Tokyo [2893 km ✈] 5 days Innsbruck [9664 km ✈] 99 days Tokyo [9664 km ✈] 5 days Fukuoka [869 km ✈] 122 days Tokyo [869 km ✈] 5 days Sydney [7835 km ✈] 92 days Tokyo [7835 km ✈] 3 days Fukuoka [889 km ✈] 31 days Tokyo [889 km ✈] 5 days Seoul [1158 km ✈] 95 days Tokyo [1158 km ✈] 7 days Fukuoka [889 km ✈] 83 days Tokyo [889 km ✈] 3 days Kitakyushu [842 km ✈] 43 days Tokyo [842 km ✈] 5 days Nara [404 km ✈] 30 days Tokyo [404 km 🚆] 2 days Takamatsu [925 km ✈] 23 days Tokyo [925 km ✈] 2 days Kyoto [372 km 🚆] 9 days Tokyo [372 km 🚆] 1 day Kyoto [372 km 🚆] 19 days in Tokyo [372 km 🚆] 3 days Fukuoka [889 km ✈] 8 days Tokyo [889 km ✈] 4 days Beijing [2099 km ✈] 7 days Tokyo [2099 km ✈] 4 days Linz [9235 km ✈] 3 days Tokyo [9235 km ✈] 2 days Niigata [254 km 🚆] 1 day Tokyo [254 km 🚆] 2 days Fukuoka [889 km ✈] 4 days Tokyo [889 km ✈]

The 'diary in numbers' is a result from a questioner about urban nomadism done in 2009 by Renate Mihatsch.

quote chosen by Tobias Moorstedt
Benjamin, W. (1932 Orig.). *Berlin Childhood around 1900*. Harvard: Harvard College, 2006



52° 22' 38" N, 9° 44' 30" O

Text: Tobias Moorstedt

THE LIVE-LIFE-RADAR

On the go

I am leaving the train station of the city of Hanover looking up into the sky. On my right there is a red hot sun, sending down its last rays and illuminating the scenery: crossroads, fountains, neon lights and flowering cherries, executives running to the last appointment of the day, a group of skateboarders performing their tricks and challenging gravity. A heterogeneous cast of citizens and strangers performing the well-known play of a summer evening. It is my first visit to Hanover, I do not have the slightest clue where exactly I am, and where I will have to be in 30 minutes, according to schedule. But I am calm. Walking across the square, I faintly remember different times, darker ages, different modes of arrival and landing. In these times, I would have had to jump out the train doors with a pulse of 140 bpm. I would have rushed into a convenience store, purchased a map of the city: 1:50 000, 3,50 Euro, 100% recycled paper. I would have fixed my gaze to its paper surface, desperately trying to find out where I might be. In such times, I might have "just" made it to my appointment, but I certainly would have missed the summer mood in the city and the skateboarders on the square.

122 - A2/8
005 - NAVI
025 - T 5/16
023 - T 3/16
010 - NAVI

But this is the year 2010, and I do not have to waste time and money to obtain a disposable map, which only covers a limited sector in the space-time continuum. I walk across the main square of Hanover with an ominous sense of direction and purpose, from time to time I look down at the screen of my smartphone, which is embedded in the palm of my hand. The phone is not ringing, no incoming messages. The gadget displays a map of Hanover, a yellow line shows the route from the train station to my final destination. On this map, I am visible, too: a blue dot that vaguely resembles the head of an antenna and its sending of concentric circles, like sound waves or radar signals – the human being as sender and receiver.

Navigation systems have been part of the standard setup of personal vehicles for a couple of years now, just like air-conditioning and power-steering. But for some time, the *satnav* or *navi*, as the ego-black-box is endearingly called by its users and followers, has been freed from the car and its existence as a stand-alone automaton and has become a basic function of every cell phone and laptop. Mobile computers and smartphones like the iPhone or the Google Phone connect GPS- and WLAN-chips, functioning as powerful personal navigation systems, individualized radar stations. On my business trip to a small city in northern Germany, I casually use satellite guidance and ubiquitous computing, tools that until a couple of years ago, were the exclusive property of high-tech military and secret services. We are living through a cartographic and navigational revolution, which is fundamentally changing the relationship of humans to urban context and space.

The default mode of the iPhone features a photo of planet earth, a blue globe before a pitch black background. It is a beautiful picture, no question. But it is also a strong visual statement that inspires the underpaid poets in the marketing departments of IT companies to slogans like 'the world in your hands' or 'smart planet'. In the 1950s and 1960s, modern societies where dreaming about space tourism and Mars Farms, innovations and industries, that would have made the gaze from space an almost everyday experience. But in the 21st century our bodies are still grounded. Only our gaze and spirit have been set free. Unlike the first astronauts, who, after seeing the globe hanging in the nothingness of space, suffered from the so-called *overview effect*: the moment of shock, when they instantly understood the marginal size and fragility of our home planet. The *overview effect* often inspired the astronauts to write poems and sometimes even triggered the conversion from scientist to believer. The picture of the program *Google Earth* on our phone and computer screens does not evoke that sense of awe, but – to the contrary – a feeling of absolute disposability. With just one mouse click or finger stroke on a touch screen the user can literally touch and turn the planet, can zoom from outer space to street level in a matter of seconds, can explore the urban spaces of New York City or the remote landscapes of the Sahara desert. Geo-Zapping is the iconic hobby of our times.

The *Google Globe* is more than a nice toy for computer whiz-kids, but an important tool for the execution of our everyday life: The software provides pedestrians, as well as drivers, with a cost-free and easy to use route-planner and automatically displays all hotels, museums, and restaurants of the foreign city, thus giving one an instant feeling of familiarity. Up until now it has been easy to distinguish the citizens of a city from the tourists – the visitors declared with their lack of knowledge with the ragged maps in their hands, the uneasy gaze towards street signs and the desperate search for landmarks. The personal navigator spares a visitor this form of embarrassment. The stranger is no longer recognizable. And maybe it is a valid question if, with all the information in our hands – the maps, the routes, the train schedules and opportunities for consumption of inner cities – we need to eliminate the concept of stranger after all.

A short history of navigation and the guilt of telephoto lenses

From A

48° 8' 14" N, 11° 34' 31" O

'Following the light of the sun, we left the Old World', with these words Christopher Columbus begins his autobiography and reminds us that great adventures not only require courage and a big budget, but foremost a sense of direction. The first long distance travelers, the sailors on the ocean and the scouts that lead the caravans through the deserts and plains of Asia Minor, took bearings with the help of the sun and the stars. And today, navigation signals are still coming down from the sky. The fixture, however – the northern star – has changed and has been shattered. The twenty-four satellites of the GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM (GPS) are circling the globe like glowing sparks, forming an orbital grid, to which the world aligns itself. Navigation systems are able to accurately locate men and machines in the concrete maze of cities and suburban deserts. The first consequence of this navigational revolution is that automobile annoyances like tattered maps in the glove box, or the fights between the driver and front passenger, which ended so many marriages, have almost entirely disappeared.

We still do not know what is going on, but at least we now know where we are – each person a moving object, a blinking, blue dot.

This *sense of location* has a soothing effect on our minds, as anyone might recall, who recently boarded a transatlantic flight from New York to London. There are In-Flight-Monitors in the cabin, which give information about the route and parameters like speed, wind, air temperature and the remaining flight time. And even when there is no steering wheel or any other input device next to this airborne navigation system, the passengers seem to gain a sense of security from following the icon of the airplane across the icy and pixelated surfaces of Greenland. Only because we know where we are, are we not bothered by the fact of where we actually are (30.000 feet above the north pole, traveling with sonic speed), and we ring for the flight attendant and another Vodka Tonic. The arrows and red lines of the satnav screen have a narcotic effect on the passengers' minds – just like a romantic comedy with Julia Roberts.

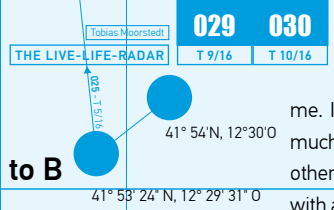
Knowing where you are and where you are going has been essential for survival in all stages of civilization. The hunters and gatherers depended on their masterful orientation skills to find the trails of game, the next watering hole, to sense the looming danger of predators in the nearby woods. Little has changed in the last 50.000 years. The survival of the fittest still means the survival of the fastest, the most aware and the most accurate. In the mobile age, where we visit more cities per month than our great-grandparents would have seen in their lifetime, and where we spend 50 percent of our time in transit-spaces and in motion, it may not be a matter of survival. We do, however, have to find new ways to scan our perimeter and find our way towards homes and aims. Urban nomads do not listen to the winds and the sun anymore, but have developed new forms of orientation and navigation.

It is an immeasurable advantage in any conflict to have the superior means of perception. The US military has been doing research on satellite navigation since the 1960's. Only when the cold war had ended did the first civilian GPS applications come onto the market. The military, however, kept distorting the signals ("National Security"!), and so the gadgets were quite imprecise and their penetration

into everyday life slow. In the year 2000, the generals decided that the public could use the full potential of the technology, which basically means that sales representatives, employees and housewives now steer their vehicles with the uncanny precision of the *apache* helicopters and smart bombs. The first satnav models were crude black bricks, adorned with a low-resolution screen, which could display only a few numbers and a single red arrow, and reminded many users of the Pleistocene of the computer age – machines like the C64 and the Atari 2600; arcade games like *Space Invaders* and *Tank*; *PacMan* getting lost in a neon labyrinth haunted by ghosts. In the 21st century companies like *TomTom* or *Navigon* offer high end design, photorealistic graphics and impressive special effects with telling brand names like *real world view*. A majority of cars on the streets of Europe and North America are now equipped with a satnav: The automobile seems not only to run on fuel but also depends on a continuous flow of information, providing us with a sixth sense for construction sites, traffic jams and other potential road blocks. Some programs like *Dangerzone* display the statistical probability of an accident and the mortality rate for a particular route. The flatscreen and the computer-voice transform the car's interior into the cockpit of a spaceship, and the dull drive to visit grandma or to run some errands, suddenly resembles a video game. And since we are using satnavs not only in cars and planes these days, but also on the streets, in everyday spaces, and on vacation and business trips, we will all soon be sitting in a cockpit permanently – the only difference being, that there is no windshield between us and a sometimes harsher reality.

From the dawn of time man has been interested in the nature and the location set up behind the next hill. Maps, magnifying glasses and the sun-dial are not only means of measurement, but also security mechanisms. Only through observing, organizing and understanding space, does the human being secure its place on the planet. Paul Virilio, the French architect and philosopher, understands the entire history of human civilization as an evolution of perception technology. In our striving to create life-like and real-time representation of the earth, explains Virilio, we have transcended the distinction between global and local, mobile and immobile. 'The telephoto lens has erased the topographical frontiers', he writes in his essay 'City of Panic', 'not only has it become unnecessary to travel into the distance, it also is no longer necessary to return home. All surfaces are facing each other.' Humans are speeding around the world, and, at the same time, writes Virilio, everything stands still, trapped in the desert of images. We have to ask ourselves, if navigation technology is not only enhancing our sense of place, but also distracting us from our present location. Ironically, a study by the German Automobile Club ADAC found out that the use of satnavs, under some circumstances, might increase the risk of a car accident, because the drivers are no longer looking at the road but at the screen.

'In 100 meters, turn left!' Or: 'Follow the road for 25 kilometers!' Or: 'You are driving in the wrong direction. Turn around!' And, at the end of every trip, the calming statement: 'You have reached your destination!' The voice of the satnav is part of life on the road, just like the sound of the engine and the impatient honking of the adjacent car. However, only a few culture pessimists are disturbed by the metallic vibrato in the computer voice and the fact that we are taking orders from a computer. Some even are reminded of HAL, the computer in Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which at some point felt the need to kick out its human passenger into airless space: 'This mission is too important that I could allow you to jeopardize it!' *(How, in this sense, do we make sure that we use the machines and they do not use us?)*



The eternal city, reloaded

A traditional travel guide like *Lonely Planet – The Eternal City* or *Merian – Discover Rome* offers five different routes through the Italian capital. Red, green, orange and blue lines, which provide – according to the claim on the cover – 'a deep and intimate insight into the life of the city'. The travel guide wants to tell a dynamic and three dimensional story. Like a narrator, it leads tourists and it makes sense by providing certain information and omitting other facts and places. It leads us past the Vatican, the Coliseum and a famous fountain, landmarks and viewpoints, ancient signs made of bronze, presenting the official version of the city's history. But for visitors it is sometimes hard to ignore the feeling that this conventional touristic route avoids the most beautiful and relevant places. Or that there are, even in this 3.000 year old structure, some recent developments and openings, that defy the slow and canonical ways of the travel guide. Or that there might be some spots, that the locals want to keep to themselves. There is the concern that the conventional route through a city might turn out to be a holding track, that we are just being flushed through the streets and are never really there.

The city, writes Walter Benjamin in his book *A Berlin Chronicle*, is a text that you have to read with all your senses and your feet. The American scholar and psychologist Edward Casey has spoken in a similar manner of the way that places 'gather in' and 'hold' memories and information. Visiting his hometown Topeka, Kansas, Casey writes that he 'finds this space more or less securely holding memories for me. In my presence, it releases these memories, which belong as much to the place as to my brain and body.' Benjamin, Casey, and other authors perceive the city air as an information-rich atmosphere with a specific voltage from which pedestrians and visitors can download data (in the case of their owning a compatible device and the right password). In the 21st century, the sensibility of the flâneur has been translated into a digital network and actual business plans. The digital maps which we follow are enriched with additional information that exceed by far the data-volume of a traditional representation of space – street names, police stations, public transportation and green spaces. The points of interests in a city are no longer marked by metal plates and cotton flags, but by digital pins, which Derrick de Kerckhove, a student of Marshall McLuhan of the University of Toronto, calls 'airtags'. Thus small amounts of information, invisible to the sky, are attached to a certain location on the globe: 'With the help of modern cell phones that combine GPS with internet access, we can leave virtual notes on real places. We extend a certain space with a piece of information that can be downloaded at this location. It is almost some sort of medieval magic that suddenly became real.'

Google Maps and modern navigation systems not only represent buildings, parks and streets, but also describe the commercial and social dimension of space. The structure of a city, which is commonly represented as a pattern of anonymous rectangular forms, is being broken up. The actual building or spot on a map is surrounded by a cloud of data, from which we can download information about its function, the phone number and website, photos and accounts of other travelers. Walking through Rome, we do not only see the dirty walls and signs in a foreign language, but we can see with one click all four-star hotels in the area, the next pharmacy, interesting museums and galleries. The navigation system becomes the Life-Live-Radar.

And, unlike in the *Lonely Planet* format, the point of interest is entirely up to me.

The small software snippets that provide so much personalized and contextualized information are called Applications or *Apps*. Internet theoretician Nicholas Carr calls the App a 'cloud translator', a filter, that scans the vast information masses, which are stored online, and organizes it around the actual position, needs and interests of the user. The program *Around me* for example, works like a personalized version of the Yellow Pages, which is only produced for one user, for one moment in space and time. The App *WikiHood* for example displays all Wikipedia articles that have a relationship to the current position and instantly informs the visitor of the name, history and purpose of an ancient structure which is not mentioned in the travel guide. Applications like *Layar* and *Wikitude.me* use a phone's global positioning technology to determine a person's location and use the phone's compass to discern the direction in which the device is being pointed. Thus, the minicomputer can guess what the user is seeing, and pulls information about points of interest in that sight-line and displays it on top of the camera view. We look through the camera and see information about nearby restaurants, A.T.M.'s or available jobs or apartments displayed in front of the buildings that house them. In 2009 Google introduced a program called *Google Goggles*: If you make a photo of a certain building or a certain location, the software finds all relevant information. A couple of decades ago, people dreamed of glasses that would help to see into cyberspace and to leave this world. As it turns out, the information is coming to our world, attaching itself to concrete buildings and certain locations. The technology is also called Augmented Reality: It enriches the material world with additional information.[1]

Rome is an ancient city that consists of many different layers, projects and ideas that people had and realized, and that were, over time, covered by the strivings of the next generation. The airtags and digital markers, which already cover almost every spot on the planet, are just the latest layer. It almost feels like the city is being covered with small post-it notes. 'If these walls could talk', is a common phrase when people are standing in the Coliseum, and this dream is coming true. The walls are actually quite talkative these days.

In the early 20th century, Georg Simmel wrote in his brilliant essay 'The metropolis and mental life' that 'the indifference to that which is spatially close is simply a protective device without which one would be mentally ground down and destroyed in the metropolis.' For a long time, the habit of urban people constantly looking at and listening to cell phones and MP3 players seemed to be a perfect illustration and technological update of the psychological technique that Simmel observed, a protective shield to separate themselves from the masses and the intense surroundings. Immersed in a private soundscape, engaged in another interactive scene, one can set certain limits to the city as a shared perceptual or social space. Paul Virilio even called this self-isolation of urban inhabitants an emigration to a 'virtual sixth continent', on which they would live in miserable separation. Now we learn that Virilio was probably mistaken and that the surfaces of these media-bubbles have long been perforated, that there are holes, interfaces and connections. Someone who looks into the screen of his smartphone does not necessarily want to flee from his surroundings, but maybe is actually learning a lot more about the place online. The airtags are not exit signs, but anchors to the real.

A visit to Rome is nothing like it was ten years ago. We can download the strange opening hours of the museums and the erratic schedule of the metro, and if we get lost in the small alleys of the inner city, we just activate our digital compass and satnav, that

[1] www.youtube.com/watch?v=b64_16Ke08

028 - T 8/16
030 - T 10/16
029 - T 9/16
063 - E 1/14
185 - V 3/8
160 - V 8/8

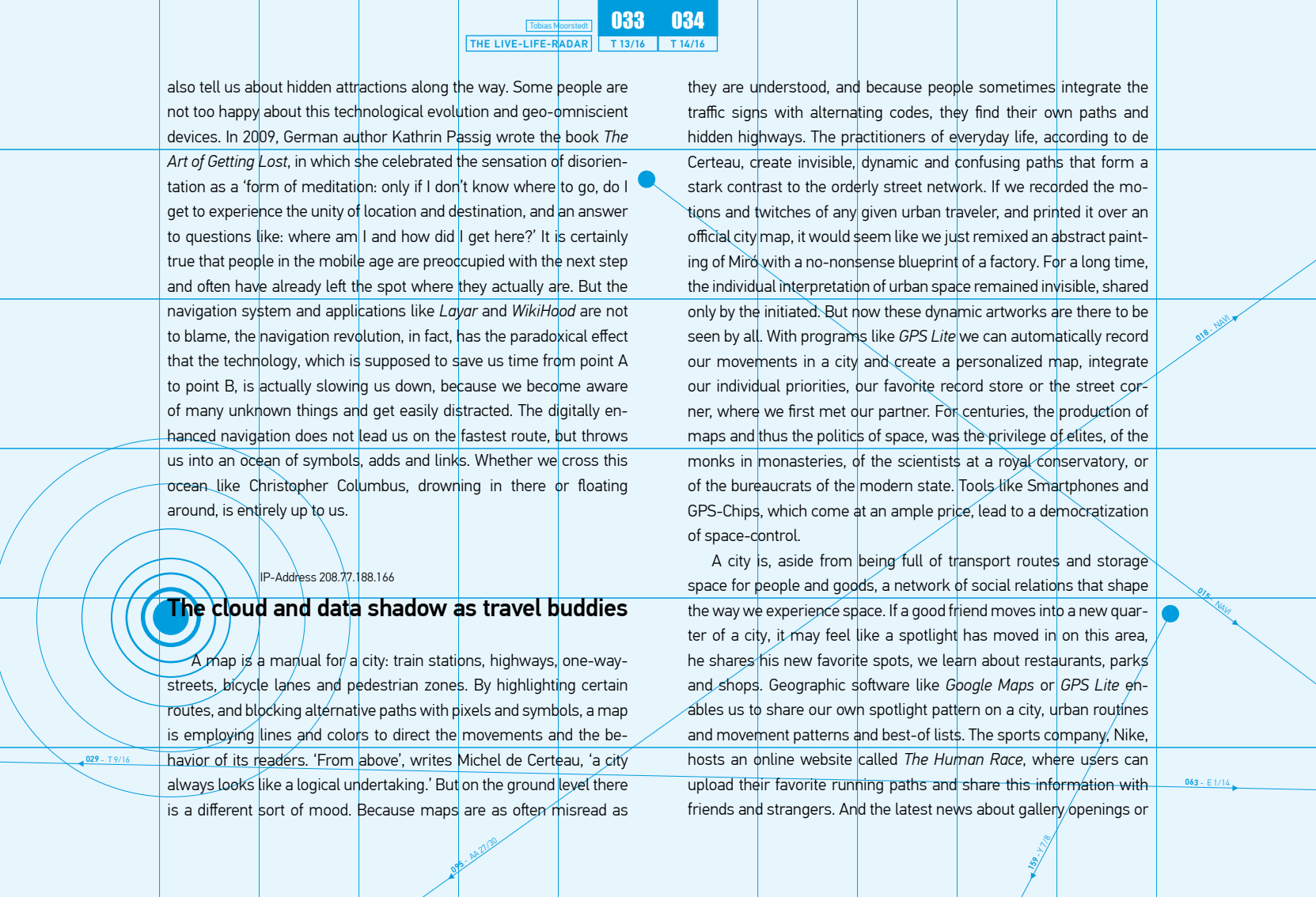
also tell us about hidden attractions along the way. Some people are not too happy about this technological evolution and geo-omniscient devices. In 2009, German author Kathrin Passig wrote the book *The Art of Getting Lost*, in which she celebrated the sensation of disorientation as a 'form of meditation: only if I don't know where to go, do I get to experience the unity of location and destination, and an answer to questions like: where am I and how did I get here?' It is certainly true that people in the mobile age are preoccupied with the next step and often have already left the spot where they actually are. But the navigation system and applications like *Layar* and *WikiHood* are not to blame, the navigation revolution, in fact, has the paradoxical effect that the technology, which is supposed to save us time from point A to point B, is actually slowing us down, because we become aware of many unknown things and get easily distracted. The digitally enhanced navigation does not lead us on the fastest route, but throws us into an ocean of symbols, adds and links. Whether we cross this ocean like Christopher Columbus, drowning in there or floating around, is entirely up to us.

IP-Address 208.77.188.166

The cloud and data shadow as travel buddies

A map is a manual for a city: train stations, highways, one-way-streets, bicycle lanes and pedestrian zones. By highlighting certain routes, and blocking alternative paths with pixels and symbols, a map is employing lines and colors to direct the movements and the behavior of its readers. 'From above', writes Michel de Certeau, 'a city always looks like a logical undertaking.' But on the ground level there is a different sort of mood. Because maps are as often misread as they are understood, and because people sometimes integrate the traffic signs with alternating codes, they find their own paths and hidden highways. The practitioners of everyday life, according to de Certeau, create invisible, dynamic and confusing paths that form a stark contrast to the orderly street network. If we recorded the motions and twitches of any given urban traveler, and printed it over an official city map, it would seem like we just remixed an abstract painting of Miró with a no-nonsense blueprint of a factory. For a long time, the individual interpretation of urban space remained invisible, shared only by the initiated. But now these dynamic artworks are there to be seen by all. With programs like *GPS Lite* we can automatically record our movements in a city and create a personalized map, integrate our individual priorities, our favorite record store or the street corner, where we first met our partner. For centuries, the production of maps and thus the politics of space, was the privilege of elites, of the monks in monasteries, of the scientists at a royal conservatory, or of the bureaucrats of the modern state. Tools like Smartphones and GPS-Chips, which come at an ample price, lead to a democratization of space-control.

A city is, aside from being full of transport routes and storage space for people and goods, a network of social relations that shape the way we experience space. If a good friend moves into a new quarter of a city, it may feel like a spotlight has moved in on this area, he shares his new favorite spots, we learn about restaurants, parks and shops. Geographic software like *Google Maps* or *GPS Lite* enables us to share our own spotlight pattern on a city, urban routines and movement patterns and best-of lists. The sports company, Nike, hosts an online website called *The Human Race*, where users can upload their favorite running paths and share this information with friends and strangers. And the latest news about gallery openings or



shopping hotspots are no longer communicated by city magazines or travel guides, but through real live best of-lists on social-networking sites like *Facebook* or *Myspace*.

To live, writes Benjamin, means to leave traces. Today, that does not mean that we have to scratch our name in a tree or spray-paint a concrete wall. The marks, opinions and experiences of travelers are accessible through the web, and provide us with different perspectives. When we come into a new city, we are not alone anymore – as long as we switch on our computer and listen to the chorus of voices, which tell us about pleasure, sorrow and regret.

Location is the most important parameter of the mobile age. If we call someone on the phone, the first sentence is no longer: 'How are you?' Instantly, we want to know: 'Where are you?' Social relationships have assumed a geographical quality, in what neighborhood do you live, where do you hang out, how many miles did you collect? Soon, this question might be unnecessary as well: More and more smartphones – remember, the human being as a blue, blinking dot? – allow us to send a signal that can be traced by destined users, friends and family, or, depending on the privacy setting, the whole world, a spatial update, a non-stop SOS-signal without the looming danger. Programs like *Google Latitude* make it possible to find other members of our clique or workforce in the city. This scenario reminds some people of dystopic visions like *Brave New World*, a society, in which you always have to account for what you are doing and where the individual is contaminated with a powerful transmitter. There are, of course, legitimate privacy concerns, when it comes to recording every single one of your motions and purchases. What is similar to Huxley's dark, sparkling world (in which you do not have to burn the books, because nobody wants to read them anymore) is that people are not being forced to use the new technology; there are no implants. Everyone buys the new software and gadgets and soon cannot imagine a world without them. It just seems like a good deal.

On our mobile devices, we are not only storing our music, emails and valuable contact information, but also our movements and favorite locations. In the logic of the integrated and networked society in which we live, it would be a waste to just let this data lie around on the hard drive. The traces we leave, our patterns, proclivities and personal networks are being processed, and form, as executives of the IT industry like to call it, our *data shadow*, a digital but measurable entity, which tells a lot about us. One example: Because we used a cell phone to purchase tickets to a museum or to search for an Indian restaurant in New York or to call a cab with the App *Taxi Finder*, the computer learns something about our lifestyle and tastes and social milieu, and, on the next trip, might suggest a stop at a certain café, because our earlier decisions and motions make it seem likely that we will enjoy it. Navigation follows the same logic as the *Amazon.com* bookstore: Customers who liked the Reijksmuseum in Amsterdam are probably also interested in the Pinakothek of Modern Art in Munich. And this is just a very simple example.

The navigation system is morphing into a gigantic, collective geo-consciousness, which determines our ideal route through a city – we do not have to think about where we would like to go, and which route to follow, but we are being remote-controlled by our own preferences and consumer history. 'Turn left', says the personal navigation assistant, as we walk through a new city. We do not protest, just nod, and follow our data shadow into the unknown space.

014 - NAVI

The urban imaginary is an embodied material fact. Urban imaginaries are thus part of any city's reality rather than only figments of the imagination. What we think about a city and how we perceive it informs the ways we act in it.

Text: Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson

PROMENADES: URBAN IMAGINARIES, REINVENTING *OUR* CITIES AND [SEARCHING FOR] A SENSE OF HOME

Drawing on our own experiences of having lived in Europe, Asia and the United States, we describe city walks, urban promenades in different cities – *our* cities past and present – cities we were brought up in, cities we have lived in, and the cities where we currently live. Some of these promenades were experienced together, walking in Brooklyn or London; others were re-constructed and re-imagined as we emailed each other. Through these promenades, we suggest that our perceptions, practices and memories of previous places are intertwined with the present, constructing a sense of place, which is never completely here or elsewhere.

Out of our stream of emails have emerged the socio-material practices that have embodied our shared memories and experiences of *our* cities. We are suggesting that one's perception of a city is always a collage of all previous experiences of cities, in the same way that our perceptions in general are always imbued with our memories. One is always elsewhere in a sense: in London thinking of New York, in New York thinking of Hong Kong, in Singapore thinking of Paris. As a result, we do not describe "real" spaces, but spaces that have been constructed and recreated. The cities to which we refer are in a sense imaginary, we have created 'imaginary homelands, [cities] of the mind'[1], as part of our search for *home*, a home 'rooted in absence'[2].

By means of these promenades we hope to reveal our sense of place, our sense of home, and how this has evolved, since we have lived variously in London, Paris, Singapore, Hong Kong, New York and Edinburgh. The essay, as a person-centered narrative, a fragmented conversation, reflects the struggle of neo-nomads as they move across physical spaces, but more importantly across emotional spaces. We explore a central issue for neo-nomads of how we are connected to our space through objects, memories, relationships, rituals and digital technologies. Indeed, while these promenades take place in our minds, they are embodied and material, as they include coffee cups – paper or not – metro cards, and people's use of public spaces.

Influenced by the work of geographers[3] and philosophers[4] who highlight the role of experience in our relationship to space and our construction of place, we conceptualize space not as a closed system but as an emergent product of relationships, suggesting that the distinction between space and place might need to be rethought in the context of the experience of neo-nomads. As we were writing, we found ourselves asking whether home is actually where we live, or is instead a *sense of place* that is carried within us where ever we have lived and worked and which allows us to feel connected, 'an *embodied* material fact'[5].

continue also inside

quote chosen by Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson
Huyssens, A. 2009. *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age.* Durham: Duke University Press

156 - Y 4/8

1 **Rushdie, S.** 1991. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism.* Great Britain: Granta

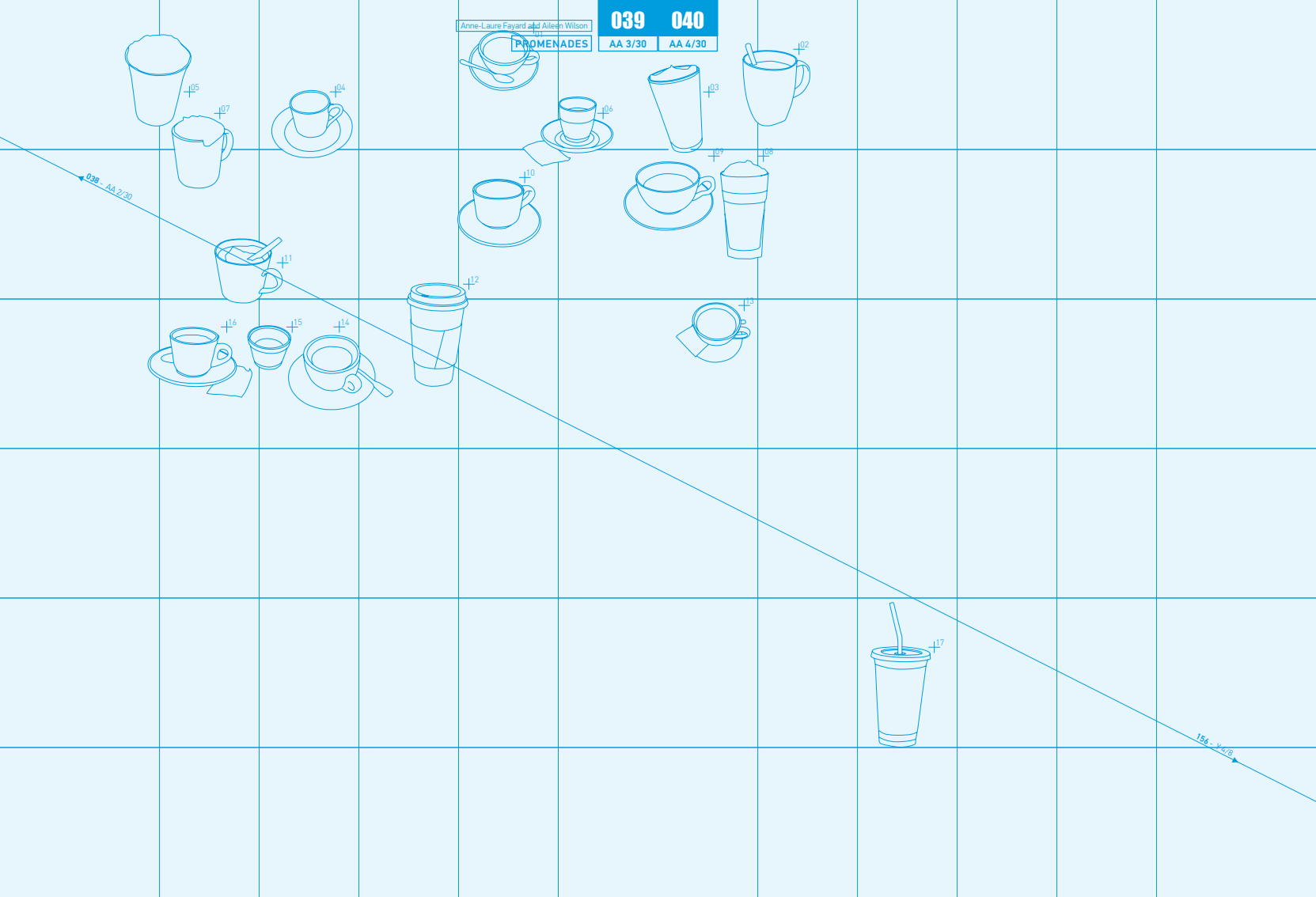
2 **Weil in Iyer, P.** 2001. *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing

3 **Tuan, Y.-F.** 1977. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience,* University of Minessota Press
Massey, D. 2005. *For Space.* London: Sage

4 **Malpas, J.E.** 1999. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography,* UK: Cambridge University Press

5 **Huyssens, A.** 2009. *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age,* Duke University Press

157 - Y5/8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01 AW In London, visiting Anne-Laure with ten minutes to spare until my day-pass began, I went looking for a coffee. I walked and walked eventually stumbling upon a café. Grateful to get coffee to 'have-in', I reached to stir it with a metal spoon that then I returned dirty to a cup at the side of the counter.

I've been looking for coffee to take-away now that I live in London. I've not really found a coffee shop to sit in – "my" coffee shop. It might also be that I haven't found my coffee buddies yet. I'll probably feel more at home once I've found my coffee shop. **01 ALF**

02 AW I hesitated in a diner, as I wasn't sure if I should ask for a white coffee, a coffee with milk or indeed what a 'schmeer' was or if I wanted one. With a line behind me, and having watched those in front order, I knew I had to be fast – 'a coffee, light', I said quickly. In Scotland, one orders slowly, considering firstly everything one doesn't want, 'Oh, no. I don't think I fancy a cake today', or 'Oh, no, I'll not have more than a cup of tea.' It's rude to be too decisive and certainly rude to ask as if commanding. In New York, anything less slows down the line.

I'm smiling reading this as I remember the day you told me that story. We were lining up to get a coffee in New York and were noticing how "professional" people were when asking for their coffee. They would say a brisk 'Hi' (maybe not even) and then order: a grande latte, with skimmed milk and a drop of caramel syrup. In Paris, people do not mention what they don't want, but neither do you line up! You wait for the waiter and then you have only a few options: espresso, allongé, café au lait or noisette. **02 ALF**

03 AW Visiting London after many years in New York, I find I am getting confused when I want to cross the road. Look right. Look left, white lines and a textured surface. 'Just make a run for it', I think. 'They'll stop', I think. But they don't. I feel outraged and indignant, but knowing that there is no risk that my accent becomes a distraction, I show my anger. It feels good.

I empathize. I look at the signs but they don't help! Weird! In Singapore, it was easier to get used to driving on the right. I'm worried about how I'm going to manage when I get a bike. In New York, I had a similar feeling of confusion with temperatures: degrees Fahrenheit vs. degrees Celsius. 'Tomorrow, it's going to be nice, in the 70's.' The 70's? I had no clue what it meant. I was never able to feel the weather in Fahrenheit. I just knew that around 40° F, it "became" cold and above 90° it was hot, not mentioning a 100°. You can get used to new currencies, but temperatures, weight, and height are more difficult. **03 ALF**

04 AW I have the opposite problem as I can only think in Fahrenheit now. In Scotland I never paid any attention to the temperature. In New York, though, I listen every morning and terms like 'wind chill factor' really intrigue me, as it is only here that I've ever heard these terms. In the UK, the shipping forecast is read on the radio. I liked listening to it even though I never understood a word of it. Carefully placing my coffee between my feet, eating a bagel and holding the paper, I go the few subway stops to work. In the London underground, there are no breakfasts being eaten, but everyone reads.

In New York, people eat their breakfast; here in London, they read. When they are done with the newspaper, they leave it on their seat, and the next commuter picks it up. In Tokyo, people read the news on their cell phones. In Paris, people in the métro read and no one eats, either. **04 ALF**

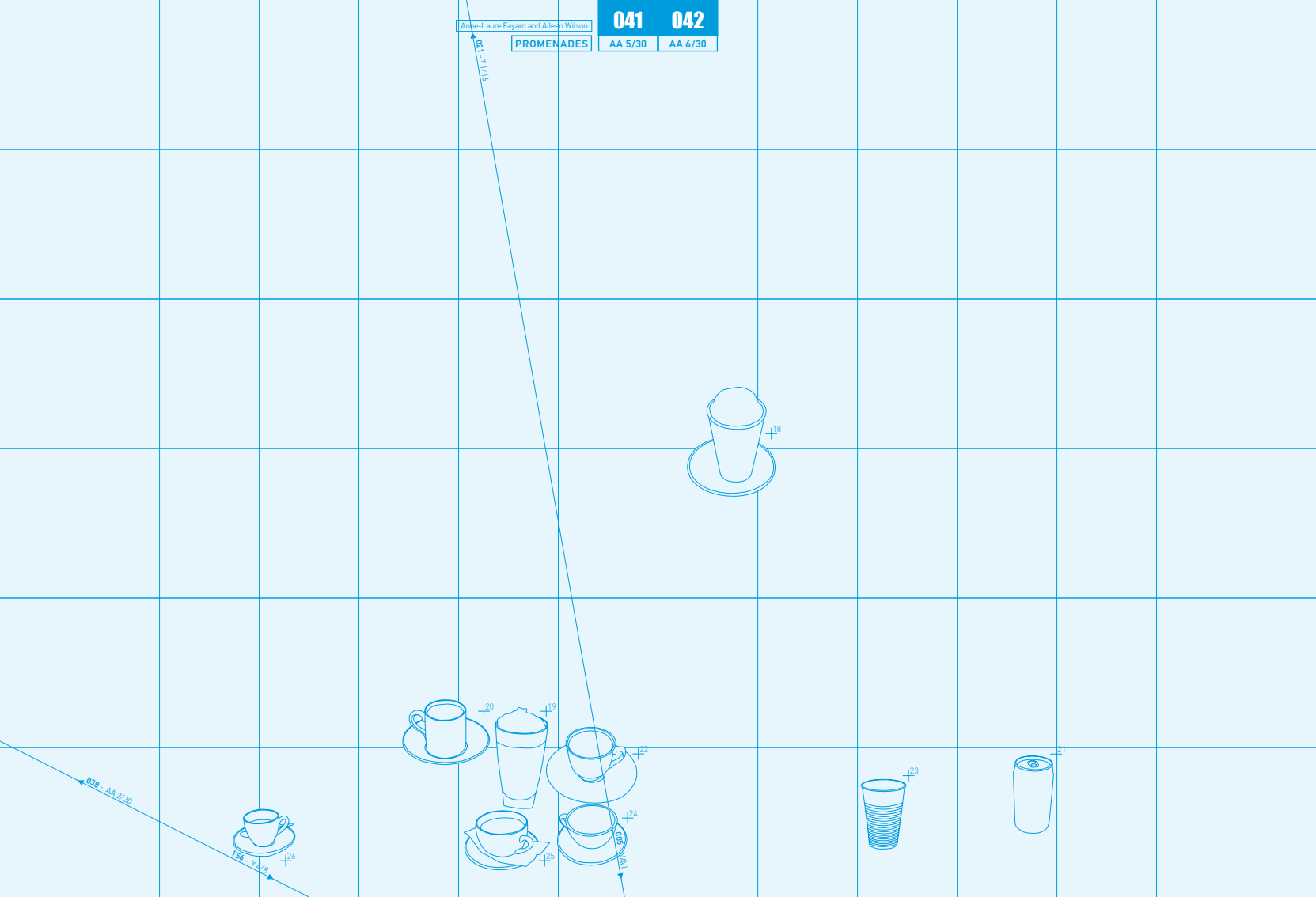
05 AW Mind the Gap should be changed to Mind the Step as these new underground trains are higher than the old ones. They come in 2 min, 4 min or 7 min and I appreciate the electronic signs, and there is certainly a comfort in knowing. The subways trains, they just come – except maybe the G. In Hong Kong, it didn't seem to matter as even the wait was pleasant and when the train came, we would all be lined up at the lines indicating exactly where the train doors would open.

Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson

PROMENADES

041 AA 5/30

042 AA 6/30



In Paris, at peak hours, you squeeze together as much as you can to fit into the train. When I was a kid, my German au pair **05 ALF**
put her bag on my head so that we could fit in the morning métro taking me to school. People tend to move towards the bot-
tom of the car, so that more people can fit. Those who stay seated on the folding seats might get scolded. In New York, I was
surprised that people didn't try to move into the car to let more people get in. In fact, people there tend to stay on the platforms
and wait for another train as soon as there might be too little individual space. I remember the angry looks the first time I tried
to get on a train and pushed "apologetically", but still pushed to fit in. I learnt to stay on the platform. Bodies don't get too close
in New York; personal spaces are bigger than in Paris. I kept thinking about the work of the anthropologist Edward T. Hall[6] as
I was waiting for the next train on the Jay Street Borough Hall platform.

[6] Hall, E.T. 1990. *The Hidden Dimension*. New York: Anchor Books

06 AW Yes, space, and how pedestrians or passengers in trains or buses experience it, is interesting. In Hong Kong, everywhere was as crowded as in China. I never felt uncomfortable but I know many who did. On trains in China, it was not unusual for people to fall asleep on your shoulder or to wake up and find someone asleep on the end of your bunk!

When I came back to Paris after a year in New York, the métro seemed very clean but also small. When I came back to Paris **06 ALF**
after a year in Singapore, it was the opposite. The Singaporean MRT is so clean: modern and high-tech, nearly silent. It is freez-
ing cold inside compared to the tropical weather outside.

07 AW A walk, an hour boat ride and another walk made for an interesting commute. Sitting on the back deck early morning bordered on idyllic. Instant noodles, with ham and an egg was a typical Hong Kong ferry breakfast. I never knew I could eat almost anything for breakfast. Almost anything in New York means a coffee and bagel and cream cheese – to go.

In Singapore, people commute but the maximum commute is only an hour and a half to cross the whole island. Yet, the **07 ALF**
weather forecast is specific: It might be raining on Orchard Road but sunny on Geylang Serai Road. In the MRT, there are signs
forbidding people to eat Durians. Singaporean taxis – yellow, blue or white – are cheap and easy to get. I went to campus by
cab as there was no convenient public transportation and it was so cheap. Yet I realized I missed reading. In Paris, I had a long
commute – two hours and forty-five minutes back and forth, a mix of train, métro and a short car ride. In the train I loved
reading, writing my Mandarin characters, chatting with colleagues, sometimes sleeping.
In New York, one has to get used to the rats running on the tracks, even on the platforms sometimes. In Paris, there are tiny
grey mice. I've been looking on the tracks searching for rats in the London tube, but haven't seen any yet. This morning I saw
a squirrel crossing the street near Chalk Farm. It reminded me of all the squirrels jumping from tree-to-tree in Brooklyn.

08 AW I was hoping the attendant would let me out of the underground system, I couldn't find my ticket. I had forgotten that one needs a ticket to enter and a ticket to leave the London tube. In Scotland, I must remember to ask for a milky coffee or a coffee with milk. I enjoy drinking it in mugs, seated, surrounded by various baked goods. In Hong Kong, I developed a taste for cold, unsweetened coffee in a tin, drunk anytime and anywhere. In Cuba, I enjoyed sweetened coffee, drunk standing at bar counters, and in New York, in the summer, iced coffee in clear plastic cups with lids, drunk through a straw while walking.

Although some of the elements of coffee drinking changed – sitting at a table, standing at a counter or walking, in a paper cup **08 ALF**
or in a real cup – I kept drinking it black, unsweetened and hot. I remember my friend Damien stopping by in Singapore after a
month in Vietnam and Cambodia, and drinking a coffee I'd made him with delight. He loves espressos and has been missing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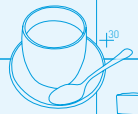
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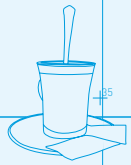
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038 - AA 2/30
157 - Y 5/18

them desperately. He told me of this Cambodian village where the people of his small hostel brought him a black drink they called coffee, but which did not taste like coffee. Yet, he still enjoyed it; they were so happy to make him "coffee".

09 AW New Yorkers can't make tea, not the tea I like anyway. In my opinion, the water must go in before the milk otherwise the tea does not 'steep' – a word that I have only ever heard used in relation to tea. If the milk is already in there, I always wish I'd ordered a coffee.

I am sure the French don't know how to make tea. It's maybe because they don't drink it with milk. **09 ALF**

10 AW Coffee, wi-fi, laptops, sofas and armchairs. Not in the London I knew but it is in the London I see now as I walk around. It is ubiquitous in the New York I know, however, and I can concentrate there with my laptop and coffee.

Coffee drinking in Paris is more about the social interaction. In cafés, you can see people who are reading, writing or discussing lively politics, literature or philosophy. There is some sort of "pose" about working in a café in Paris that you don't have in New York. In Paris, I guess it comes from the memories of the literary cafés such as the Café de Flore *in Saint Germain where De Beauvoir and Sartre, among others, used to work. There was a café on Boulevard St Michel that I used to go to on Thursdays in my first year of college as I had a two-hour lunch break. I would have a carrot salad and an espresso, and then I'd work. I have spent many hours working on papers in cafés. Wi-fis and laptops were not in the Paris I knew, but I'm sure they are now. Recently the city started offering free wi-fi spots in parks.*

My laptop is at home, in the office, always on: emails and Skype – continuous connection. Text messages on my cell. Always on or nearly. In coffee shops, I rarely take my laptop except if we were to work together. Instead I read, and scribble in my notebooks. **10 ALF**

11 AW Granada, Spain, involved a breakfast of churros and bowls of hot chocolate sitting in a café. Tea, coffee and hot chocolate are all drunk in bowls in France, but in Nicaragua, chocolate milk was enjoyed in plastic bags.

My sister talked of meeting in Maine next summer. My oldest friend, Fiona, and I met this summer and talked of her American family in Maine. This conversation straddles Edinburgh and Pitlochry and travels with me to New York and London. Home is this conversation continued with these people while walking on streets that are narrow and winding, and on avenues, that are wide and straight.

Yes, and here we are, writing, sitting on the same sofa in London where I have just moved, a city where you lived for seven years. You're going back to Brooklyn soon, and it's Brooklyn, which still feels like home to me. I went this summer to Paris, where I grew up and went to school, and which most people consider my home. Everything is so familiar and yet I sometimes feel so foreign as I walk those familiar streets. I know them by heart but they don't feel the same as when I walked them ten years ago. Home is more when I chat with you about your life in Scotland, in Hong Kong, your travels in China, about my life in Paris, in Singapore, and our perception of New York. Those conversations feel like home. We both were born in two different countries, and lived different lives. We met in a school yard in Brooklyn when our sons were in the same Kindergarten class. Sharing our experiences and memories, we suddenly felt at home. I remember a conversation about big cities and the feeling of being a foreigner on a sunny winter morning. **11 ALF**

12 AW Yes, I enjoyed those conversations. Reflecting on all these places in terms of the here-and-now is important to me. Perhaps we were beginning in our own way to create a sense of home.

Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson

PROMENADES

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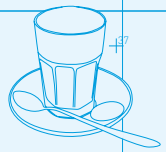
046 AA 10/30



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038 - AA 2/30

157 - Y5/8

In New York, London or Edinburgh, my oldest friend, Fiona, and I continue the conversation we started over forty years ago. It began in a small town in the highlands of Scotland and has accompanied us while walking the streets of Manhattan, or sitting in flats in London, it is the conversation about families and how to survive them.

This conversation sounds so familiar! It is the one I share with my old friend, Marguerite. We have not reached our 40th anniversary but we have 20 years of friendship. It started in Paris during high school, and we have continued that conversation by email when I moved to Singapore, then New York, and it is still going now that I'm in London. We pick it up where we left it when we meet once a year. Each time, it's as if we've had lunch or coffee the week before. She is one of those rare people who don't expect me to stay the same. Unlike the people described in Kundera's novel 'Ignorance'[6], Marguerite does not expect me to be the Anne-Laure she met at 16. She does not like me because of who I was then, at least not only for that. She loves me also because of who I've become. This is something rare and precious. I remember coming back after a year in Singapore and realizing that most people were not interested in where we lived, or even in our life, friends and routines in Singapore. Our life seemed to have stopped the day we left Paris, and we were expected when we were with them to rewind back to that day. **12 ALF**

[6] Kundera, M. 2000. *Ignorance*. New York: Harper Collins

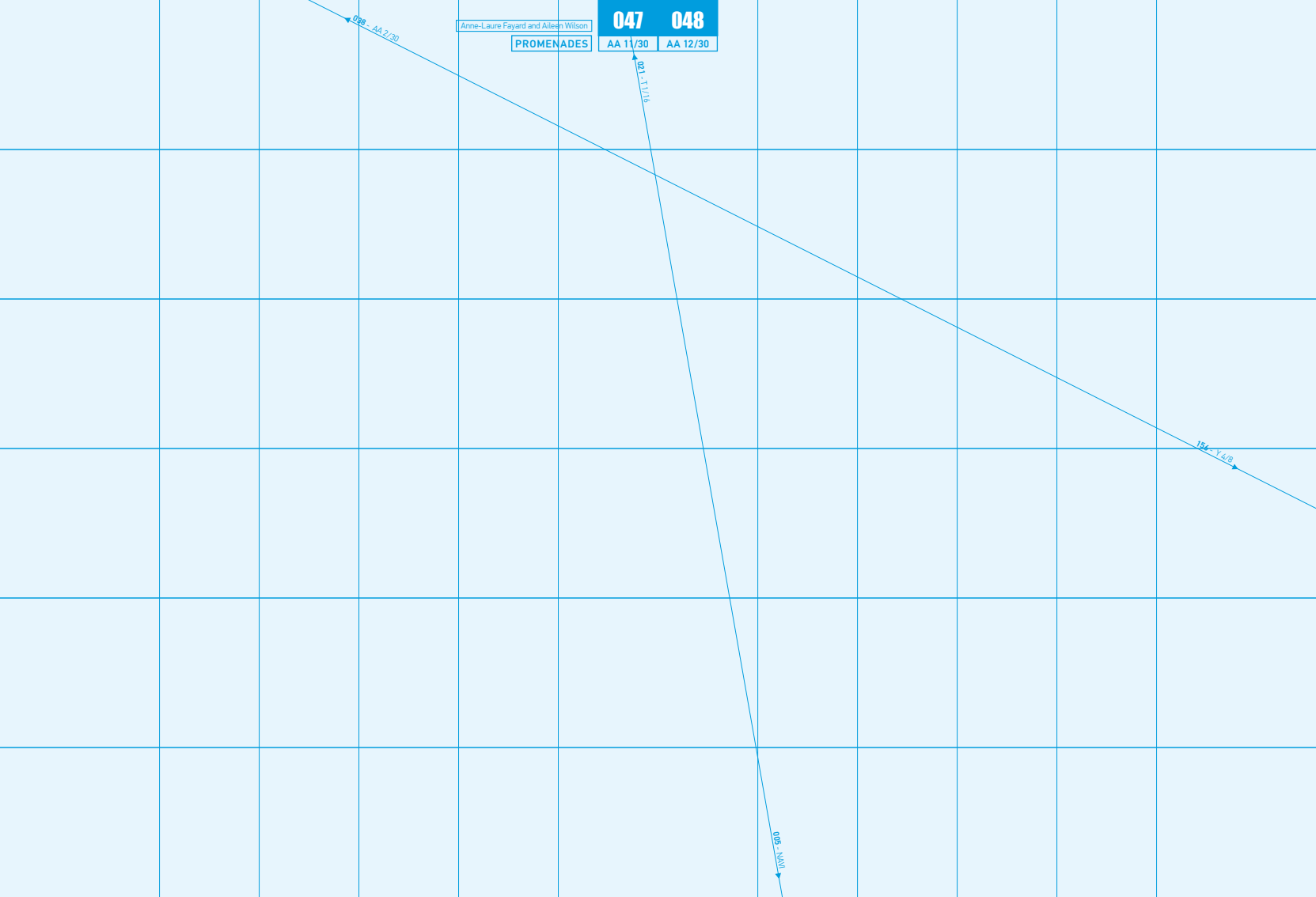
13 AW Yes, that's familiar. When I go to Scotland, my family rarely asks me about my life in the 'other' place. We talk about Edinburgh or Pitlochry where they live and their lives and homes. I can't decide if this is due to disinterest or to envy. Recently, I've been thinking that it may just be harder for those who stay. It is possible that they are just unimpressed. The Great Khan suggested to Polo in 'Invisible Cities' that even after all that traveling he sounded no different from someone who had stayed sitting at their front door. He asked: 'So what is the use, then, of all this traveling?'[8] I have only asked myself that once and that was in New York when I was having trouble finding a job.

'Close the shutters during the day when it is hot and only open them at night after the lights are turned off, then the apartment will be cool', she explains in Italian. 'The radiators are hissing because of the steam', he tells me in a strong New York accent, as I open the window because of the heat. 'Put on another sweater if you are cold', my Scottish mother tells me inside the house on a winter day. In Italy, I had to remember to take a thin sweater for the cool summer evenings, in New York I needed the same thin sweater for the hot winter offices, and in Scotland I needed that thick hand-knit for the houses without central heating where I could see my breath when I woke up in the mornings. They all felt like home.

[8] Calvino, I. 1972. *Invisible Cities*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

My first summer in New York reminded me of Singapore. In the summer in New York, it's freezing cold inside while it's hot and humid outside. You need a sweater when you take the train, go to the movies, sit in restaurants and go to the office. In Singapore, I always turned off the air-con and opened my window. At home, we barely had the air-con on. In France, you don't have air-con in houses. In Paris, there are only a few weeks that are really hot (more than 30 degrees Celsius) and in the South of France, houses have big walls and shutters. People close them during the day. **13 ALF**

14 AW Was it exile, immigration, travel, wanderlust or a search for work or for adventure? I find myself distinguishing my reasons for moving to New York to those of the people already living here. I didn't arrive searching for work although I needed a job. I never came because NY was the center of the art world although I enjoy the art. I was not fleeing a hostile regime although Thatcher was pretty hostile. I came because I could, because I could move, because I can move, I find it easy. I find it a lot harder to stay. I always imagined as I was studying art in Scotland that it would be possible to travel and work anywhere and that the connecting factor to the place would be just that, the work. I related to a diaspora of artists and writers, although I certainly wasn't one myself. I was intrigued, though, with the notion of being outside of a place and inside it at the same time.


Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson
PROMENADES
047
AA 11/30
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098 - AA 2/30
121 - T1/16
154 - Y 14/8
005 - NAVI

Hard to know why one leaves but there is an element of choice in the neo-nomadic way of life. I can't help thinking that I might sound spoilt when I talk about my need to live abroad to feel free, while some people have no choice other than living in their home country, for political or economical reasons. Being the other might then just be painful. It reminds me of the two refugees, one from The Congo, one from Rwanda, that Yasmine Abbas met and how they longed for their country, their families and friends. **14 ALF**

15 AW Fascinating to me was what Yasmine said about neo-nomads creating 'transitional space'. It reminded me of Hong Kong on a Sunday when all the Filipino amas would meet. Sunday was their day off so they would all gather under the overpass near the central ferry terminal. Literally hundreds of Filipino women could be seen sitting on the ground eating, talking: seizing a 'transitional space', creating or re-creating "home".

In Singapore, on Sundays too, on Orchard Road, in a gallery in front of an old mall, a crowd of Filipino maids could be seen standing, eating, chatting. Many went to church on Sundays. There was the religion, but it was also about eating, meeting, talking about home, missing it, but also feeling at home with people who spoke the same language and knew what home meant to them. Transitional spaces indeed! **15 ALF**

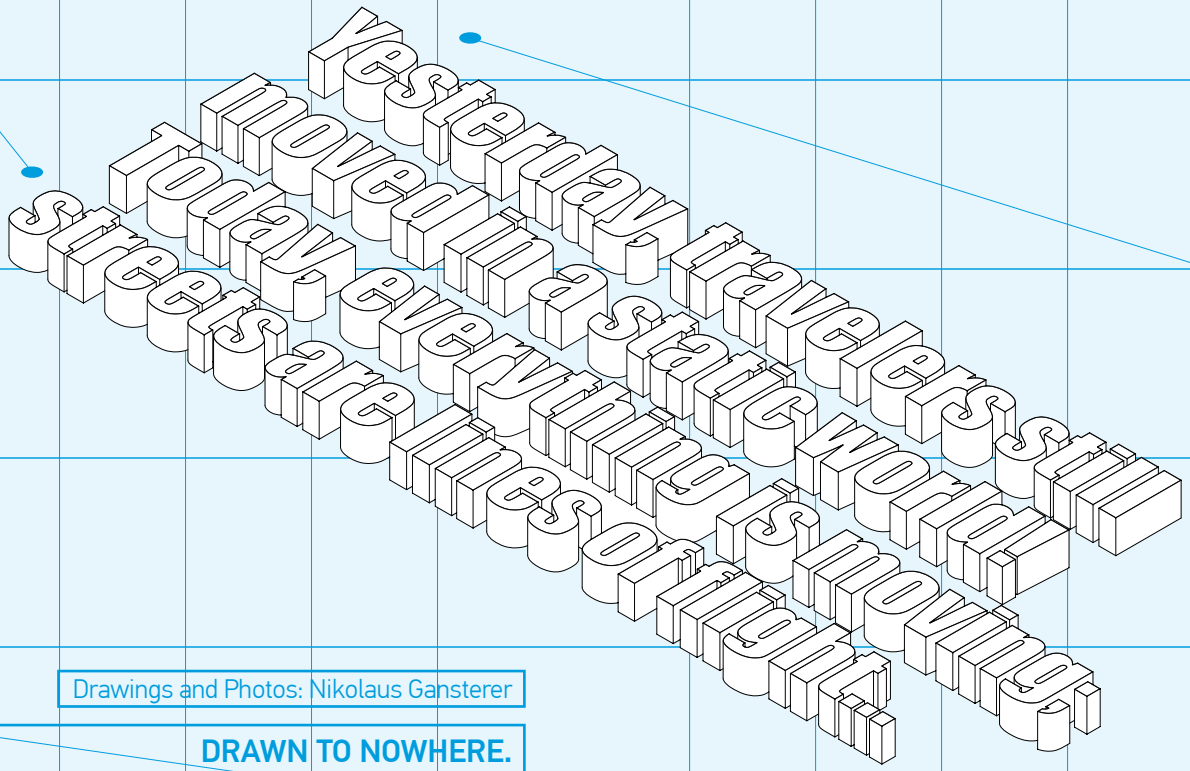
16 AW Now they might have webcams, wi-fi, laptops, or Skype under that underpass too!

They might ... For sure they have cell phones and various methods to send news home. I remember this ethnography on cell phone usage in developing countries showing people had developed complex ringing codes: one ring 'It's me'; two rings 'I'm fine'; three rings 'I'll send money soon', etc.
Nomads have a purpose or a goal: following their herds, finding places for them to eat. What are the motivations of neo-nomads? Through our dialogue, I realized that there are no clear reasons and that there are no general ones either, although there seems to be similarities. For example, we both love cities; we both love being the foreigner in a new place and the sense of freedom from this estrangement; we both were ready to challenge our routines and boundaries and we both had been wondering how to survive our families. **16 ALF**

17 AW To me, it is the city that is key. I always move to another city. I went to the Highline, the new park in New York that was created from a disused elevated railway line. The architects ended the park by framing the railway so the public can watch the city while sitting on a bank of benches. A picture-frame idea suggests that city is a show, a performance. Manhattan has always been admired, from up high on the top of the Empire State or from its outer boroughs, the Brooklyn Promenade. To me though, this is key, it is the city that I watch and move for.

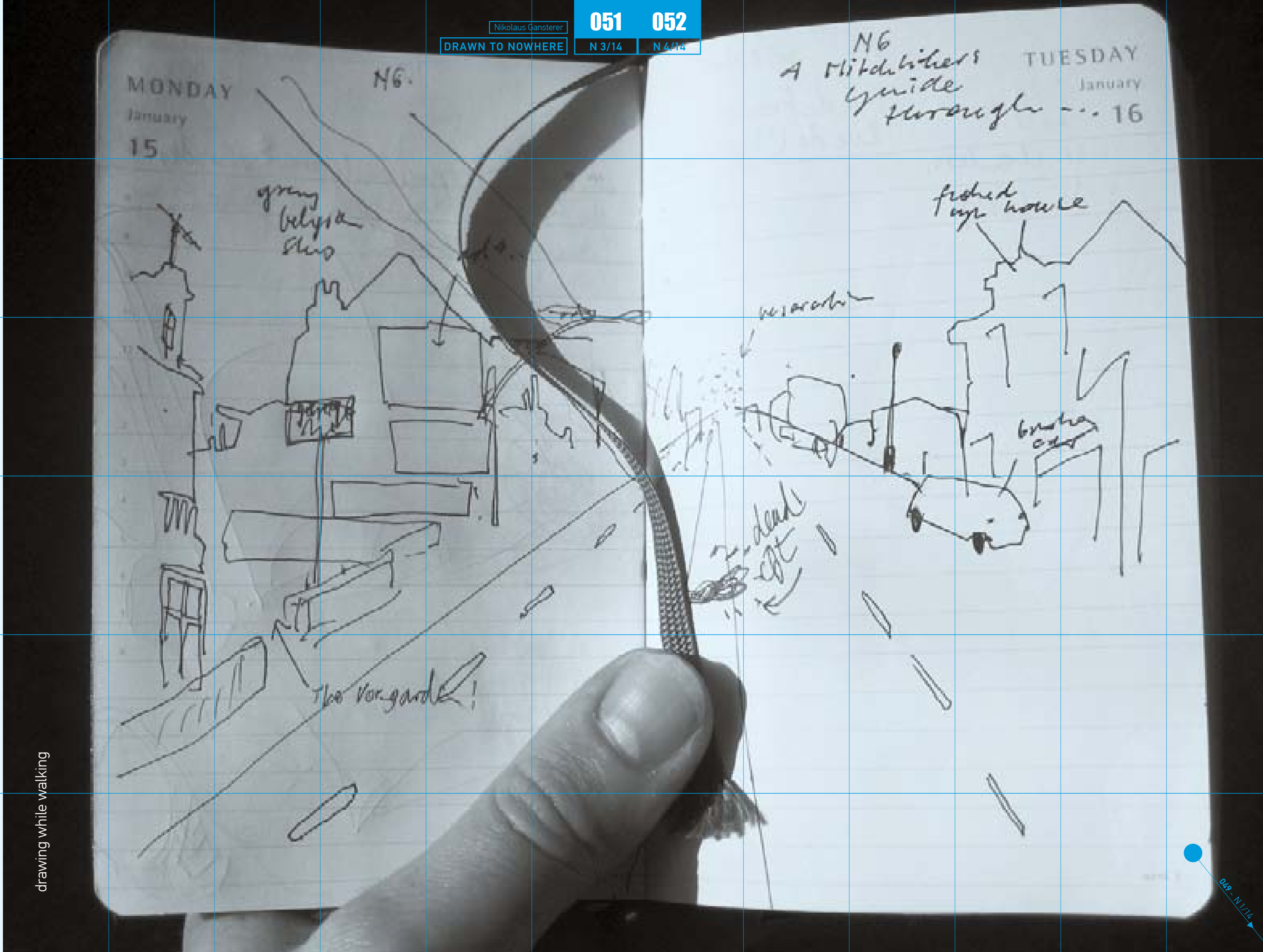
A philosopher friend told me once that men were originally nomads. Some started settling down and then developed laws, rules, systems, which made nomadic life difficult. I agree that societies are not made for nomads, but I am not sure humans were originally nomads. I sometimes feel that at the end, neo-nomads are looking for a home, a place to settle. Their neo-nomadic life might not be a choice, but only a symptom. **17 ALF**

Morand, P. *L'homme pressé* quoted in: Haberl H.G. (Ed.) 1995. *Nomadologie der Neunziger: Steirischer Herbst Graz 1990 bis 1995.* Stuttgart: Cantz (translation of quote Antonia Pont)



Drawings and Photos: Nikolaus Gansterer

DRAWN TO NOWHERE.
MEMORIZING THE STONE ROAD CODE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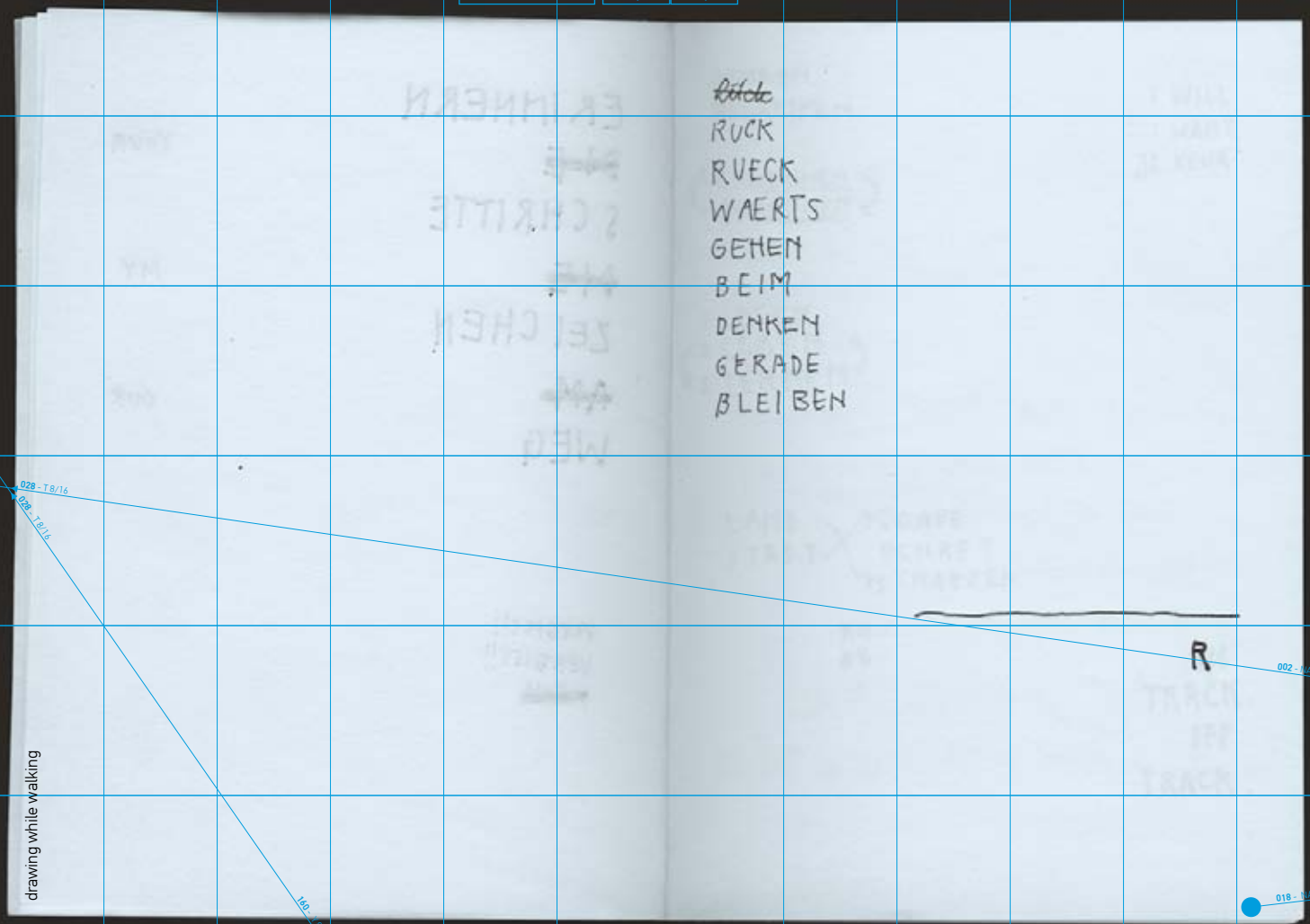
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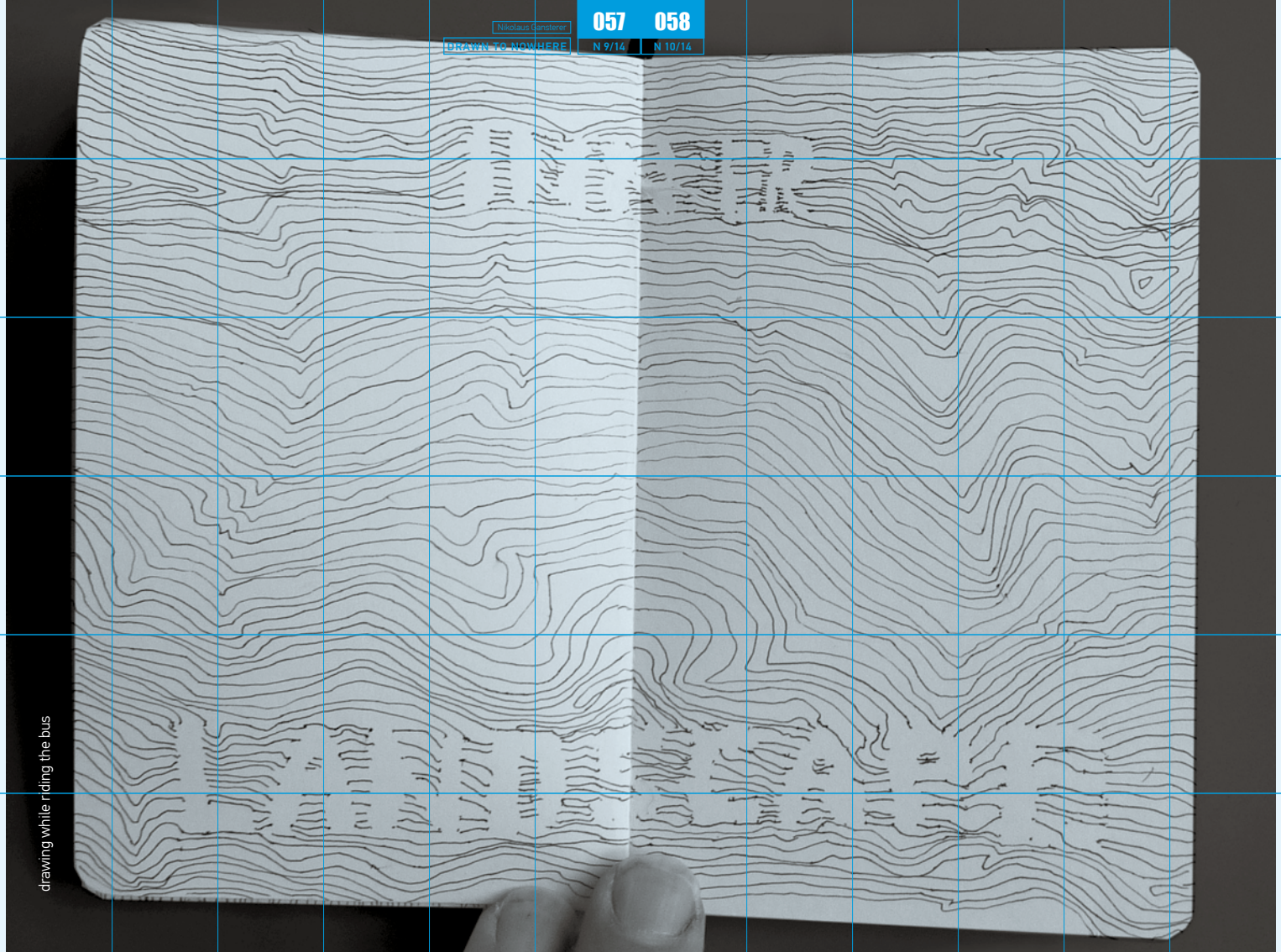
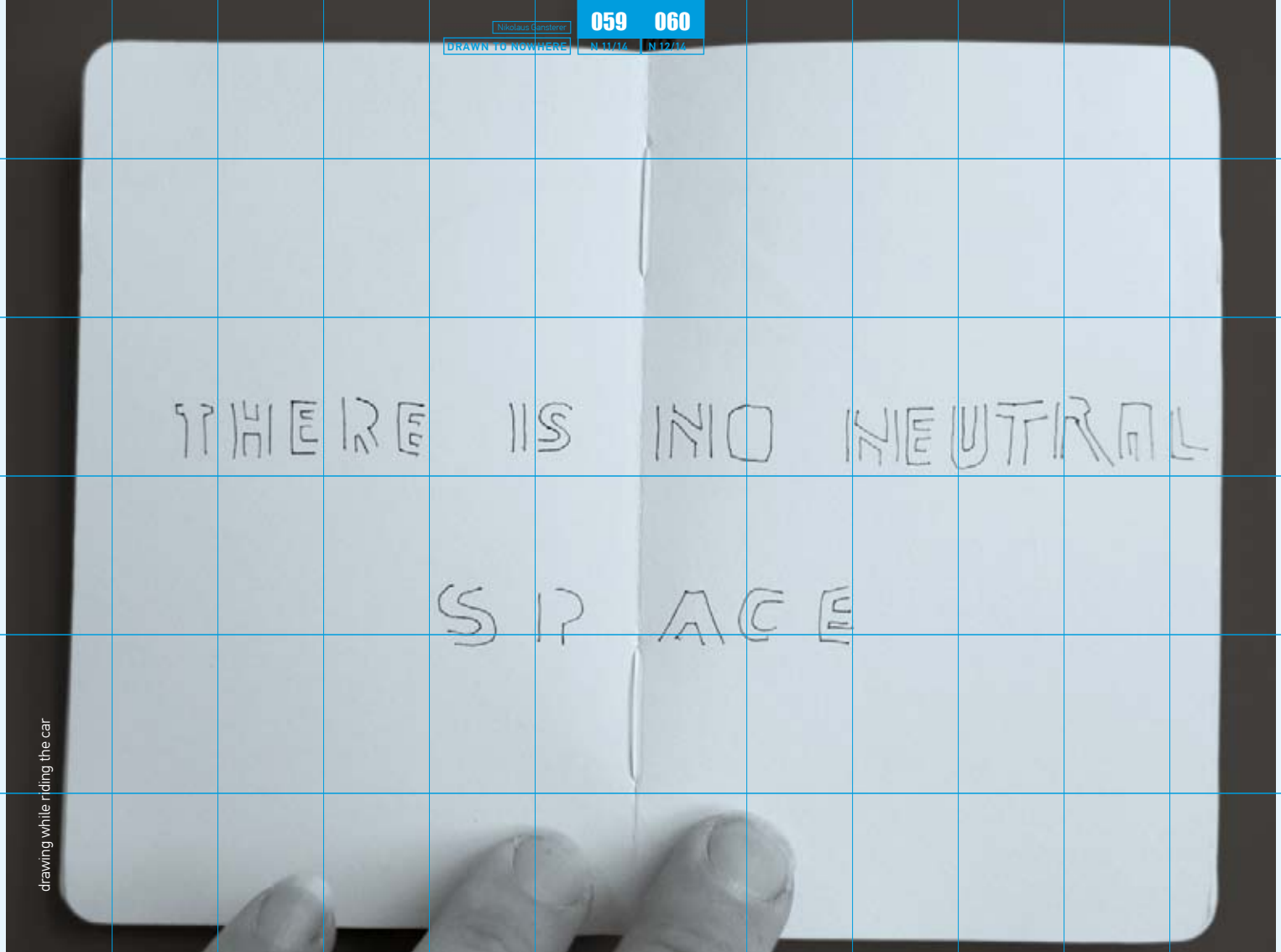
140 - 8/8
drawing while walking

drawing while riding the bike



drawing while riding the bus



drawing while riding the car

BIRDS

DEAD ONES :

drawing while riding the car

Bianchi, P. 'Go, Travel, Drive, Move' in: *Kunstforum International 136*. (translation of quote Antonia Pont) 1997

028 - T 8/16

035 - T 15/16

002 - NAVI

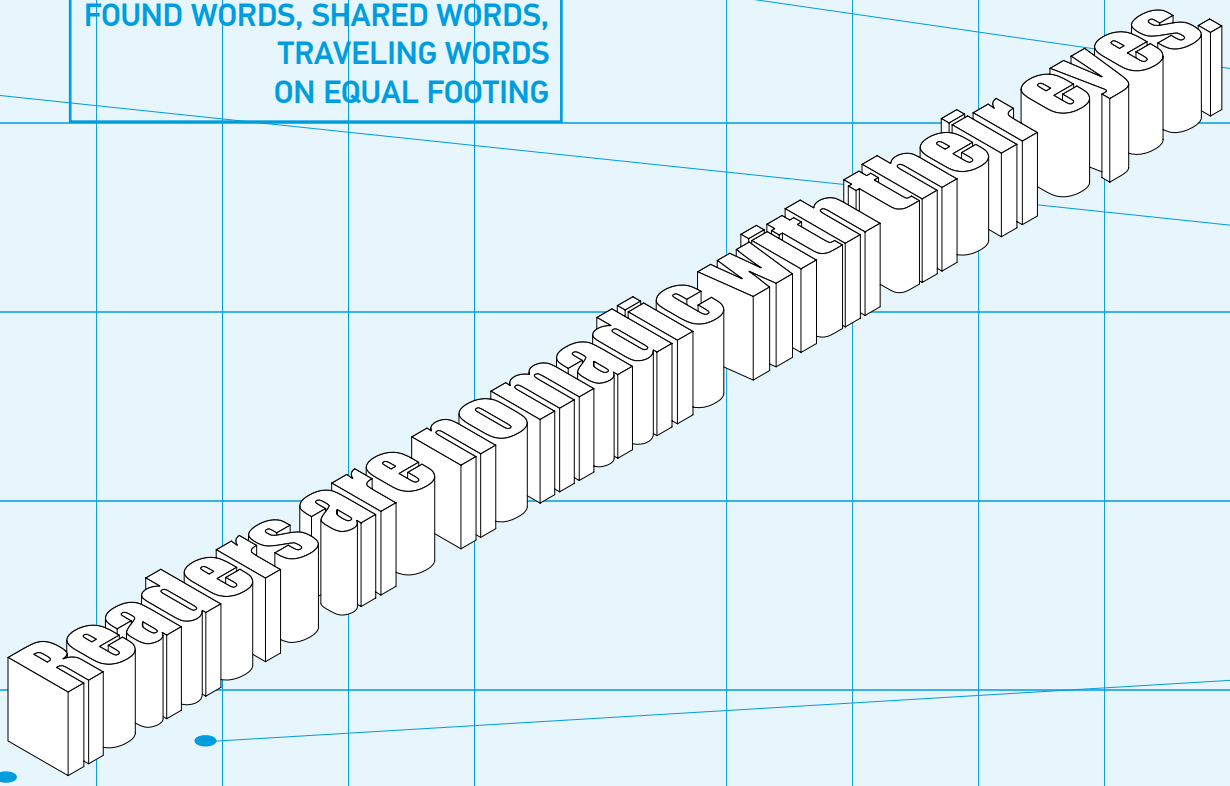
001 - NAVI

001 - NAVI

029 - T 9/16

Text and Photos (stickers): Elke Krasny

FOUND WORDS, SHARED WORDS, TRAVELING WORDS ON EQUAL FOOTING

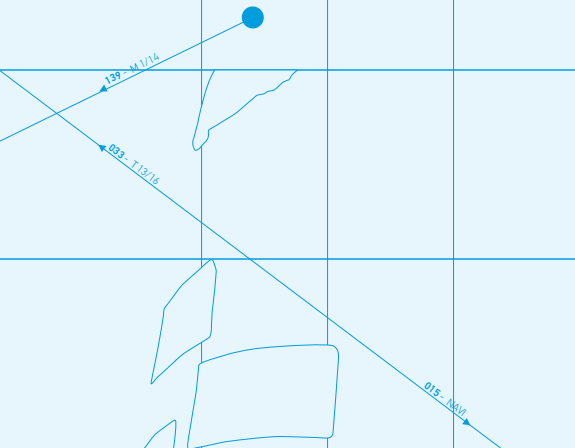


continue also inside

Glued Surface

Space of Information

Sticker



‘Prendi e Leggi’

A small, red scrap of paper blew along the footpath. The city seemed to be deserted. No matter how much the city might have needed the feel of bustle and energy to feel city-ish, there was not a soul around to accomplish this urban desire. All the tourists seemed to be safely tucked away in the corners where it is suggested tourists go, contemplating the one and only touristic reality: historical assemblage. As far as the locals were concerned, it was too hot for busily roaming the streets. They had retreated into the comfort of the shade. Their whereabouts were elsewhere. There was simply nobody around to read the message.

I bent down and picked up the forlorn looking piece of paper, black letters on red ground. I was close to the centre. While I bent down to gently lift the found words, I felt the presence of the town hall in my back. Looking at the specifics of locality, the gap in representational logics was quite profound. In my back, this symbolic marker of a powerful labyrinth stood strong. Resembling a gothic cathedral, the town hall was a reminder that the gothic epoch had seen in the growth of cities and the emergence of an urban bourgeoisie.

The city is an ongoing system of relationality bringing together quotations and references that are beyond doubt for most of its inhabitants, more a felt presence than a clearly understandable mode of knowledge production. In order to quote a city, one’s perspective is culturally instructed by the symbolic codes of buildings, by dynamics of marking and belonging. Instruction has a way of obstructing, of blocking out of sight, of getting carried away with the representational power of quotation.

I sided with the accidental fragment, the little scrap of paper. Its appearance seemed pitiful, vulnerable, lost, but equally making its debut into public space. I looked at it more closely. Strangely enough, it was all written in Italian.

‘La candele non possono certa pregare, ma possono aiutarci a pregare. Le candele hanno diversi significanti nella vita dell’uomo.’

Was it simply a stray flyer? Or had somebody put it there with a certain sense of artful subtlety, since it was placed right next to the tables and chairs that the Italian pizzeria had set out on the sidewalk? I decided it was time for these found words to move on. Before I picked them up to pocket them, I took their digital picture. With this simple act they had now forever become part of a larger network of shared words pouring out from my very private, yet very public, archive. I would include them in a new series of stickers ready to embark on their journey to other cityscapes. Soon they would be able to be read and found somewhere else. Soon they would join the hundreds of found words I have made my private, yet at the same time very public, obsession. What is collected *here*, can be read *there*. What is read here, can be given to the public eye of another city. I let the stickers travel. I set them in motion. I take their picture, put it on a new sticker and let them cling to unknown territory. The irritation of the new locality, of an inscription that was found elsewhere, is to join its new surroundings. Translocal identities have become the norm. What people share in one urban space will take on another meaning in another urban surrounding. I will never know how the message will be received elsewhere. The city is a place of hungry eyes.

Yet, the most public of experiences can often be a very private one. The dichotomy of public and private, of personal and political is

Elke Krasny

WORDS

067 E 5/14

068 E 6/14

033 – T 13/16

100 – B 2/22

158 – Y 6/8

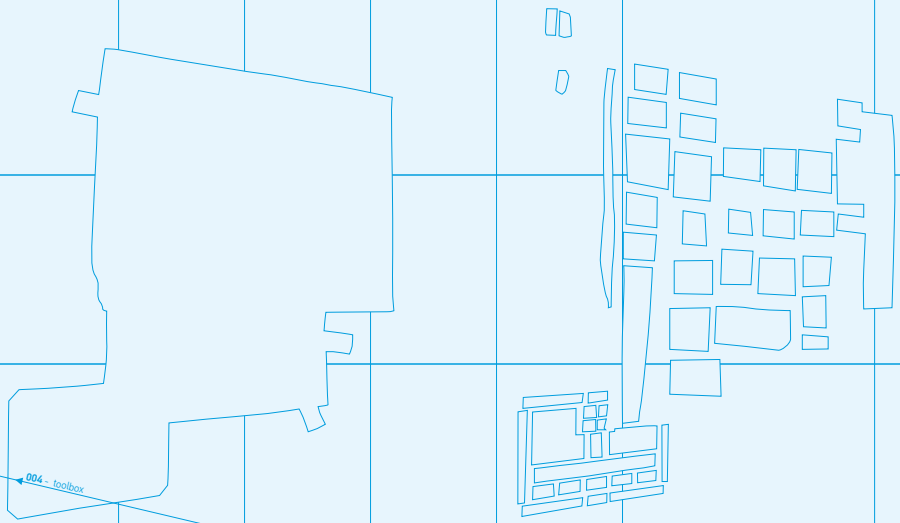
Los Angeles 2007

015 – NAVI

004 – toolbox

019 – diary

Hong Kong 2007



as intriguing as it is obsolete. It is the format that is of interest. Small notes, sticky notes, are witnesses of such a presence. They tell the state of the urban. It is the under-represented that covers the surface and articulates the voices from within. If we start to read, we understand what is going on. But reading is an issue of time, and time – as we are all well aware – is what we are running out of.

Only the most observant will ever notice the cases of changed identities, of wrong reference. The young Polish girl looking for work in Paris would have her sticker read and found in Los Angeles; the protesters expressing their disgust with the SpacePark in Bremen were about to embark for a wider audience in Ancona; the yoga offerings in Hamburg were about to be read in Helsinki; the lost dogs of Vienna were soon to be searched for in Hong Kong; the name-stickers of Tokyo were moving on to Bucharest; the neoliberal call-center job-offerings from Bucharest were already on their way to São Paulo; the prostitutes sticking their numbers and names into the telephone booths in São Paulo were soon to be read in Zagreb; the offerings of handknitting from Zagreb were on their way to Vienna. Only I would know their trajectories, but it would be there, for everybody to read.

'Geography is at one and the same time a concept, a sign system, and an order of knowledge established at the centers of power.

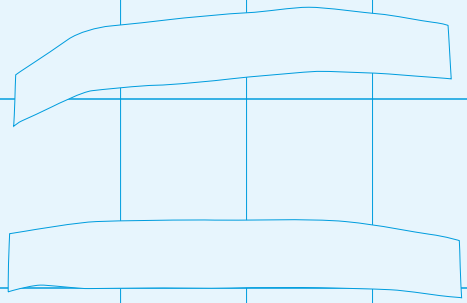
By introducing questions of critical epistemology, subjectivity and spectatorship into the arena of geography, we shift the interrogation from the centers of power and knowledge and naming to the margins, to the site at which new and multidimensional knowledge and identities are constantly in the process of being formed.'[1]

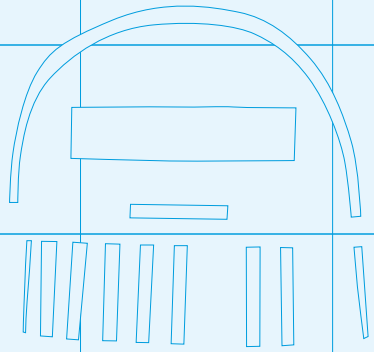
1 Rogoff I. 2003. 'Engendering Terror', in: Ursula Biemann (Ed.): *Geography and the Politics of Mobility*. Vienna Generali Foundation, Köln Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König. p. 53.

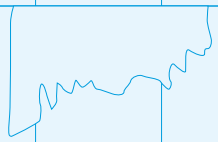
The routines of my urban curating are as delicate as they are simple, as obsessive as they are open-minded, yet they are always and consistently part of a system of global connectivities, of going public. They presuppose a reading public, a group of people connected through words found in the cityscape.

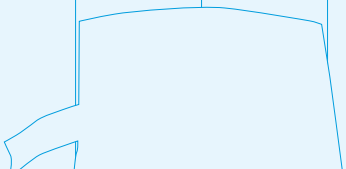
I kept on walking. I had not planned to do this today, in that very moment. It had just been an ordinary, functional walk home after a meeting, through familiar streets devoid of humans. It had not been a day planned for found reading, dedicated to the urban curating of found words. But as always it is the principle of serendipity, the chance discovery, that wins out on me. This is what I have been relying on over the course of the last five years. Cities are constantly shapeshifting, constantly in motion. Their very being, even though this might sound contradictory to everyday perception, is nomadic. The small urban choreography is a dance of signs and symptoms. I am, of course, not referring here to major movements of initiatives of urban renewal, the complex processes of gentrification or other causes of tremendous restructuring or tumultuous upheaval. What I am referring to here is the circulation of little notes; let's say that often the confines A4 are – more or less – the maximum size of expression. But the critical mass of these messages is a lot smaller in size. Their presence emphasizes the politics of the everyday. Even though they might always become poetic in perception, many of these messages are deeply indebted to the politics of accelerated economics, over-heated precariousness and transnationality. The here-and-there is multiplied into *heres* and *theres*. Writing takes a stance on the public.

'Writing is not simply a sequence of typographic signs whose printed form is distinct from oral communication.









004 - toolbox

019 - diary

Zagreb 2008

It is a specific distribution of the sensible that replaces the representative regime's ideal of living speech with a paradoxical form of expression that undermines the legitimate order of discourse. In one respect, writing is the silent speech of democratic literarity whose "orphan letter" freely circulates and speaks to anyone and everyone precisely because it has no living *logos* to direct it. At the same time, however, writing lends itself to the attempt to establish an "embodied discourse" as the incarnation of the truth of a community. Writing is consequently caught in a continual conflict between democratic literarity and the desire to establish a true writing of the word made flesh.'[2]

[2] Rancière J. 2009. *The Politics of the Aesthetics*. Translated with an introduction by Gabriel Rockhill, London, NY: Continuum, p. 92.

The writing that becomes the literature of the streets is born out of necessity, born out of desperation, born out of greed, born out of playfulness, born out of desire, born out of resistance. Even though it is deeply private in nature, even secret in its becoming (since we hardly ever see it happen), it is a social production of writing. The act of writing itself is the manifestation of a certain order of the social. What intrigues me the most is

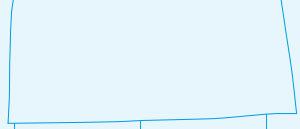
the would-not-have-been:

the would-not-have-been-written; the would-not-have-been-read. Were it not for the hands of the many who use the city as their message board, they would not know of each other. The fragility of becoming manifests itself in the cracks and folds of public space. Beyond recognition, beyond archive, beyond collection, the city as the multitude of its inhabitants produces the act of writing like a speech act. The ones who write are not the majority. The ones who write in public are at the margins. If this gives out, then the city fails to communicate. If these informal channels of communication are blocked, then the collective has turned deaf. On the other hand, it is not only the subaltern that speaks through sticky notes. The era of surveillance and control, characterized by monitoring through innumerable video cameras and privatized guards patrolling on-duty, also makes itself known through stickers. Windows and doors announce that their safety is under control. With regard to the different modes of articulation that weave their way in the public-private-interfaces of the urban surface, it is the articulation of the *zeitgeist* that can be traced through their close reading. Close reading is not only a theoretical strategy, but also a physical necessity when it comes to grappling with the literal richness of words in the realms of informal urban writing.

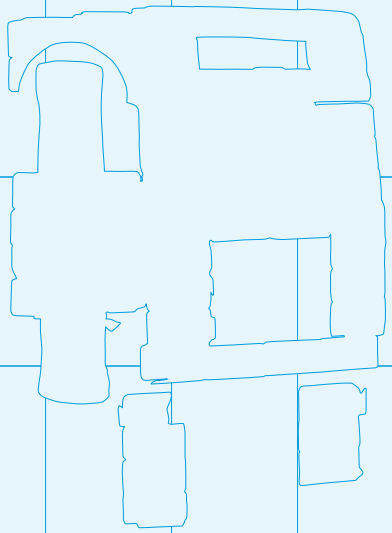
It is the relation between the public, the economy, articulation and the political that makes the notes and stickers, messages and traces, highly interesting.

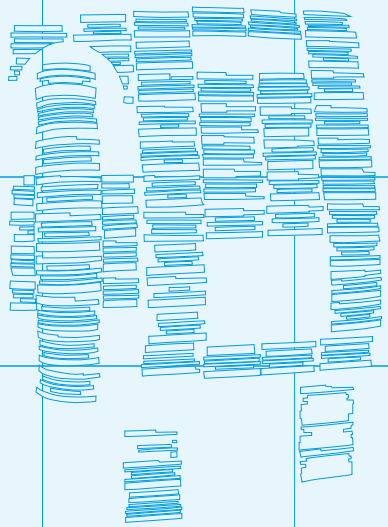
Graffiti has climbed the echelons of theory production. It ranks among the most prominent figures of urban expression, urban iconology, and urban characteristics. The little stickers that people mount in the city and the lost or discarded scraps of paper, on the other hand, are overlooked. It is the overlooked that I find attractive. It is the theoretically overlooked that makes a practical difference and communicates the moods and atmospheres, the conditions and utterances, of the urban.

Already in the mid seventies Jean Baudrillard discovered graffiti as a sign of postmodernity. In his essay *Kool Killer or The Insurrection of Signs*, Baudrillard celebrated graffiti as a moment of symbolic resistance. It is not mere graffiti that I am interested in, it is the operation against the symbolic order that is interesting. Decades later Mieke Bal opened her collection of essays, *The Practice of Cultural Analysis*, with a celebration of a graffito. The graffito combines the image and the word, it lends itself to iconology, to iconography. Bal considers



Paris 2008





São Paulo 2007

the graffito a cultural artefact, analyzing the public act of writing on a wall as a cultural operation. What becomes exposed through this act of writing is how culture works. Therefore, the graffito she had discovered on a brick wall in the Biltstraat in Utrecht, reading as follows, briefje/ik heb je lief/ ik heb je / niet bedacht[3], served her purpose of turning it into a cultural artefact. Many of the city's messages can be considered cultural artefacts, but they deserve more than one reading. Even though their cultural analysis might be of importance for expanding the inner workings of academia or the narrow confines of what could be an object of cultural significance, I always try to go beyond these constraints that impede cultural studies, in order to take the surrounding culture seriously. What I mean with my plea that these little notes deserve more than one reading, is that they are addressed to the wider public in general. They expose the inner workings of a culture that has given no other space for voicing needs or concerns. Writing is a humbler craft than the iconological impact of graffiti. Even though I am not exclusive and will at times include sprayed or stenciled writings on walls, I am more or less after the paper-world of the city's surface.

As I continue on my well-trodden path home I turn myself into a word addict one more time, I let myself become an urban reader. The words put a spell on me, I cannot stop deciphering them, I cannot stop taking their picture, I cannot stop becoming their secret servant for letting them travel from one city to the next. My eyes keep scanning the ground. Today, for once, I am not on eye level, I do not read the stickered notices, I read the terrain of the footpath. A little white scrap of paper, folded once, torn in half, catches my attention. I turn it around, it is a receipt from the grocer, and the other side has been used in order to write:

3 Bal M. 2002. *Kulturanalyse*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, p. 28.

Crataegutt 250 ml

I resort to the internet. My knowledge of Crataegutt is a limited one. I start to research, and the found words connect me with a web of information. Crataegus supports the heart, it is a circulatory remedy. 'First proving appeared in American Institute of Homeopathy in the early 1900's and subsequent provings continue to show Crataegus' ability in reducing pulse rate and lowering blood pressure. Crataegus is from the herb Hawthorne used for balancing high or low blood pressure. Crataegus helps relieve nervousness, stress, insomnia and calm hectic, hurried, anxious feelings. Common name is Hawthorne Berry, botanical name Craetagus or Crataegus Oxyacantha.'[4]

4 www.elixirs.com

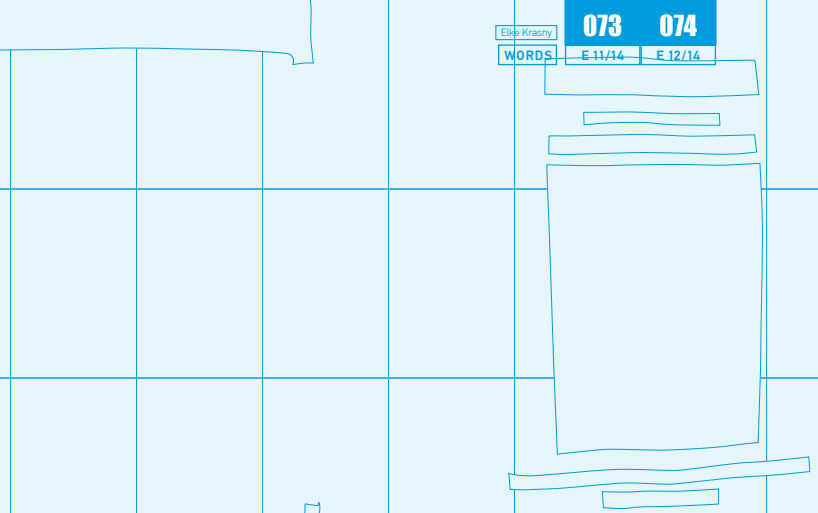
If we don't confine ourselves to the narrow limitations of conventional reading, we find unexpected worlds going beyond the expected. When I tell people about the way I read cities, their answer is always:

'Oh, you mean "lost cats".'

Ranging from the very mundane to the utmost poetic, from the political to the personal, from the proverbial lost cat to precarious working conditions, from declarations of love to political manifestations, the city speaks of it all if we start to read it.

It is the grey economy of writing that propels me – the reader – beyond the confines of the ordinary. Proverbial lost cats are only the most basic of attempts to engage public conversation. There is a lot of ground to be covered, or rather as one should say, uncovered. It is the over-looked that I am partial to. The city is writing, not the city in the first-person, not the city as a subject as *Raumsoziologie*[5] established, but the city as a state of collective writing, the city as nomadic proliferation of messages, a heterogeneous multiple, a porous collectivity

5 Löw M. 2007. *Raumsoziologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp



Vancouver 2009

of voices trying to reach each other. If all the other channels of connectivity are blocked, the last resort is the collective slate of the streets' informal infrastructure for leaving behind one's message. The grey economy of precariousness, the army of young women from Lithuania to the Philippines, from Peru to Romania, advertising their social skills. They offer to take care of the household, to babysit the offspring, to tend to the elderly, to walk the dogs. Our global economy becomes readable through small notes, through the fleeting words of precarious advertising. Economically forced migration links the nomadic existences of transnational biographies to the nomadic writing trying to find its place in the city. *The personal is political.* It has never been truer than in the case of all those female templates, offering to take care of the private work of the household, decrying all feminist attempts of procuring a future of choices.

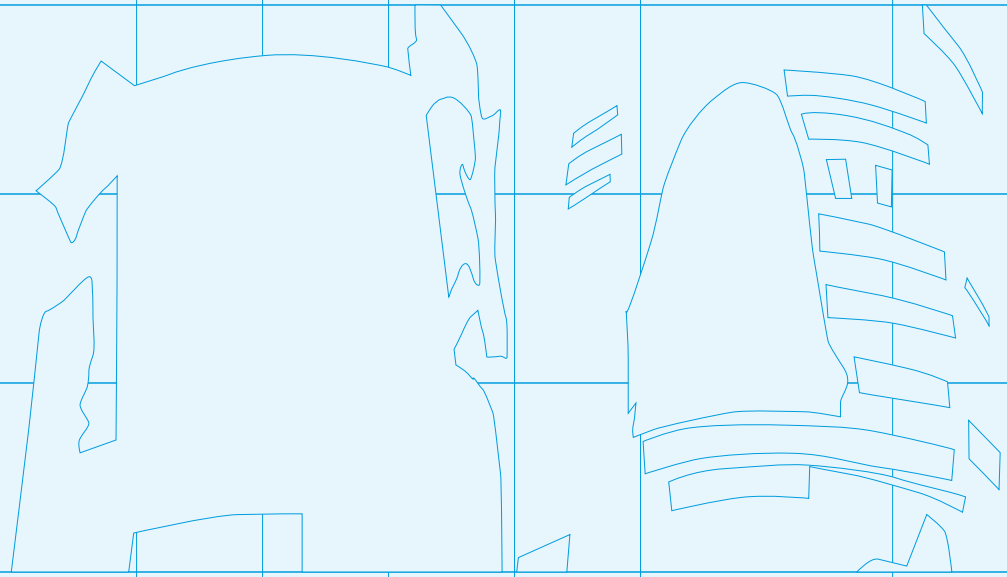
Public space is made up of the obvious which is the marginalized, the evident which is the overlooked. Workers and students alike are trying to sell their wares, their bodies and minds in exchange for money. Our society of services-rendered has become a society of cell phone numbers, the new stream of reachable, yet unfixed place-making. The little, pre-cut strips with the neatly written numbers are attached to lamp posts or hydrants to be torn off while walking past. The city's connectivities are the lifeline of precarious meetings offering the fragile basis of possible survival. The proverbial lost cat might have been the original template for calling on the vigilant neighbourhood. Now it is lost work, our lost basis for existence, lost access-roads to a work/life balance.

But work is not the only subject matter. Lost lovers, lost necklaces, chance encounters or mere greetings are plastered onto doors, walls or windows. Some cities are more talkative than others, some streets are more loquacious than others. Intentional messages are passed along by the city's infrastructure. Along the way they are joined by the lost and the forgotten: the business cards; the shopping lists; the doctors' prescriptions.

Memory and topography go hand in hand, or so it seems, in the rhetorics of how we imagine the spatial structure of remembering. But what if we were to take this idea a step further and try to understand the topography in the everyday movement-patterns of people as a kind of memory. Cities have been referred to as museums or archives, places of storage in the widest sense, in preserving bits and pieces of the past – albeit using strategies very different from the collector's approach, from those of a museologist. Unlike museums' collections, however, cities are the site of perpetual change and conflict, not the least the conflict between the old and the new. Perception, as well as the production of meaning within this unified juxtaposition of the historical and the contemporary (which clearly highlights the urban environment as an environment of contrasts and differences), shape people's experiences of both space and time. We navigate easily through these sites of multi-temporality extracting a sense of direction with every step taken in the 'temporal collage', as Kevin Lynch put it, of our surroundings.

As long as these found words are part of that distinguished realm of informality, of private utterances in public space, they might become mine, since they are part of that urban geography of private utterances in a collective voicing that I am exploring. These words reside in the interstices, they inhabit the narrow cracks, the delicate crevices, the subtle chinks, the fissures and splits of the in-between. They are stuck-on or stenciled-on, they are lost or forgotten, they are taped or sprayed, they are glued or taped. Their homes, even though they are commonly of the interstitial kind, could also be read as part of the system of infrastructures keeping cities awake and afloat: lamp

Montreal 2010



Bucharest 2008

posts, traffic signs, benches, hydrants, gutters, pipes, mailboxes. It is the grey area of informal wording, of private inscriptions, that is the currency of human exchange on a micropolitical level of space. What is continuously appropriated here is the voicing of fragile existence.

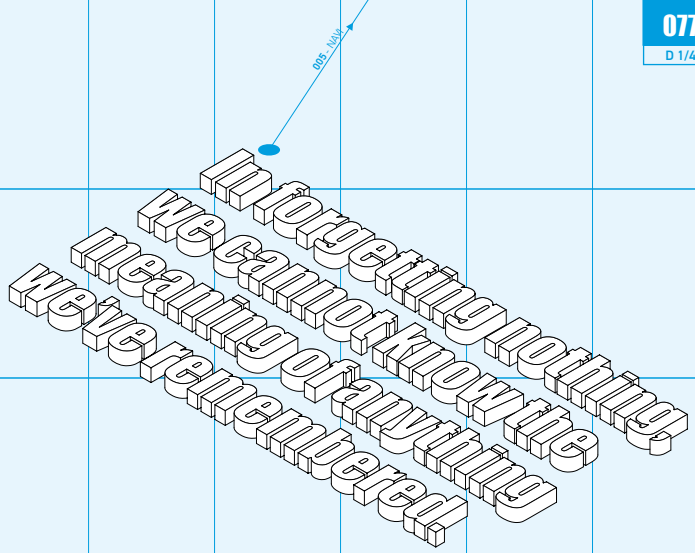
The words one can find when setting out to read the city are intense symptoms of communication. Once you start looking, name tags seem to be all around you. They have become global markers of identity, struggles of placing and spacing. Where is there room for my name?

'Hello'

with a lot of blank space to fill, seems to be the answer for identity in crisis. The public and the private, the personal and the political, they are closely intertwined.

They all do it, they all leave their messages, the ultra-left and the monarchists, the radicals and the ecologists, the cleaning ladies and the call-centers, the prostitutes and the handymen, the anarchists and the student organizations ... If one starts to read, there is no end. My micro-intervention is that of reading, of snapping a picture, of transferring the personal-public message onto a new sticker, and of sending it off into circulation from one urban space to the other. Bucharest can be read in Hong Kong now; Hong Kong can be read in Vienna now; traces of Graz are to be found in Zagreb; Zagreb can be traced on Sylt; Paris meets Los Angeles. My personal trajectories leave behind public messages from elsewhere. The journey continues. The reading also.

Reading a city is not an easy task. Even though it may sound like child's play to be the urban wanderer on the lookout for the right words, it is everything *but*. Setting out to read the urban environment as a book to be opened – for this one reader, in this very moment – requires an intensity of looking that is difficult to maintain over long periods of time. Setting out to do it requires a certain synchronicity between the self and the being of the city. Those two entities – the navigating subject and the urban ground, the lifelines of the incessant stream of words – have to connect in more than one way. Connectivity is a question of literacy. Urban readings lead to the micropolitics of globalization. The here-and-now speaks of the conditions in all individual utterances. Many *heres* and *nows* have a lot to say to each other. Stickers set in motion are the subaltern travel agents of urbanity. That is why the sticker voyage will be continued. The found words have to be found elsewhere ...



Text and Photo: Michael Langeder

THE CHRONICLES OF DIRK

What the hell!
I recognized it for the first time during the reorganizing of my private images – by accident. All those files. I was about to delete them, thinking they were the sort of temporary, system-generated stuff, the usual crap that's messing up your hard drive after all those years. It's really years since i performed one of those mind-blowing, *tabula rasa* sessions.

format c: – what a beautiful phrase i thought – poetic – almost. Typing those letters again is, every time, a deep pleasure. First the fear, the typical moment of doubt: Did i backup all the important stuff? Did i forget something? Will i regret doing it? Fantastic! One asks oneself if the screenshots of a beautiful windows arrangement is worth saving for the afterworld, if one should better get rid of the illegally downloaded hitchcock collection or if thumbnails of holiday images are enough for keeping your own past in the picture. Anyway, there were all those files, numbered and indexed, and i don't know why, mere curiosity or simple boredom i suppose, but i double-clicked one of them.

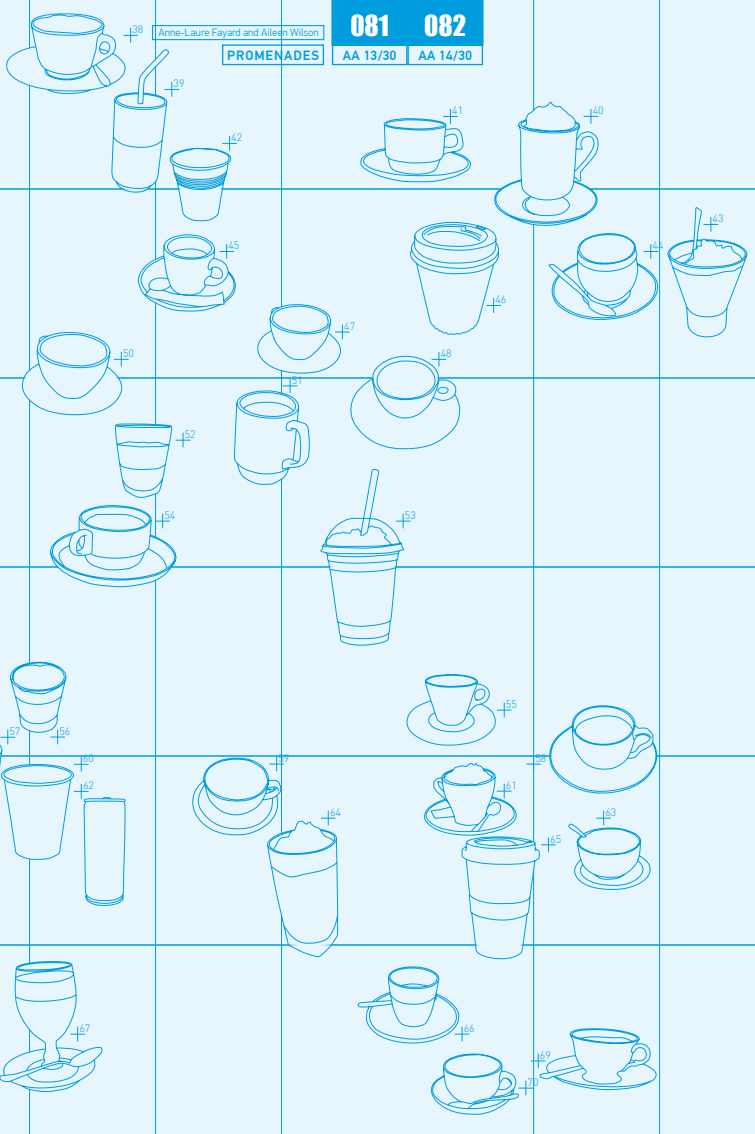
There is always the possibility of remembering something long forgotten with those lost-on-disk things. Quicktime opening – interesting, i thought, and then this short sequence of a dining room – a cafeteria – *the* cafeteria, it came back in a flash. The plastic chairs, the rows of people in front of the big sandwich cupboard, the coffee machine and – *fuck!* – me, passing by with a *bocadillo francesa*. Then it stopped. I played it again and tried to remember. It must have been recorded sometime in october 2005. But as deep as i dig, there is no memo of what-so-ever friend or colleague ever filming in there, back in the time at the university campus in valencia. Loose end, lets open another file ...

quote chosen by Michael Langeder
Augé, M. 2004. *Oblivion.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

I randomly clicked on another cryptic file-name after endlessly scrolling down this immense amount of found data. A picture pops up showing a long corridor and two vague silhouettes of something like human bodies. It's too blurry to be more precise here but this picture must have been taken in movement – a snapshot. After staring at it for some seconds, it starts to feel again strangely familiar. These are all books, it's not a corridor but bookshelves forming this narrow passage – a library – ... i've been there ... yes ... i used to stand between these shelves often, although there's no way of remembering the actual moment or place this had happened.

Déjà vu, definitely, i think, while hitting the next file.
I was slightly irritated, i have to admit, but couldn't possibly imagine what was still about to come. Nothing visible this time. Just voices, many of them. Sounds like a recording of a typical, crowded bar or coffee place. I try to concentrate and filter out some parts. There are some female voices in the foreground talking about something like an island. Taking pictures and traveling but i don't recognize the tonation till this sudden laugh appears. It's her – my girlfriend – no doubt. The conversation continues but as hard as i try i can only grasp some fragments – it doesn't make any sense and i start to drift away in my thoughts. Thinking about the first day i went to belgium. To ghent, actually. July 2006, during the annual city festival. The first thing i remembered were images i took during that time and i realized that my memory just jumped from one of those frozen moments to the next. i remembered pictures that i've seen again afterwards and the moments when i've seen them. Trying to think of the last time i watched those images successfully failed. I should have taken a picture of myself watching them.

I scrolled down to the bottom of all those files after sorting them by date. Opened the last one of the list. A picture opening and there it was. My flat? I turned around, watched the part of my apartment here in brussels and started to understand. I turned my head back towards the screen and it was black. Everything disappeared just deep black. Esc, ctrl+alt+esc, ctrl+x, space, enter, enter, enter and esc again. Nothing happened of course. I can tell you i tried everything but that was it. They were the last seconds of dirk's artificial lifetime. He would never start up again, never crash, never be my partner in long working nights. Since then i keep on carrying him around. From one place i inhabit to the next one. He's turned into a piece of decoration – a memory himself. I just can't let loose of this stupid dead piece of plastic.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I had a hard time when I moved to New York, getting used to drinking coffee while walking. I kept burning my lips and I thought it was taking away the pleasure of the experience – sitting in a café, either chatting with a friend, day-dreaming, or reading. I realize now how much I got used to it, and it became part of my coffee experience. Now that I'm living in London, I keep looking for coffee shops to buy coffee to take away. Even when I find some, I'm one of the only ones walking in the streets with a cup. When I go back to Paris, I sometimes feel like buying a coffee to take away, but I compensate by sitting in a café or at a terrace looking at people sitting around and at passers-by, or chatting with a friend. **18 ALF**

18 AW Writers, intellectuals and artists drank coffee in Parisian cafés. I had read all of De Beauvoir as a student in the north of Scotland. I couldn't wait to get to Paris and drink coffee in cafés. Nobody in Scotland in the early 1980's drank coffee in cafés.

I started drinking coffee when I was sixteen because it was the cheapest drink I could get in the café round the corner from my high school. I didn't smoke, but I drank coffee. We met after school, did our homework, and re-invented the world. I remember that the first time I drank coffee, which in Paris means a bitter, dark espresso, I didn't really like the taste but I felt grown up. The taste grew on me and I have become a heavy coffee drinker. **19 ALF**

19 AW At that age, I'd meet my friends in the local *Lite Bite* in my home town, but I think we drank tea or maybe instant coffee. We certainly ate toasties though. The act of sitting in a public space, made me feel grown up too.

Meeting someone for coffee means more than drinking coffee; it means meeting in a café and discussing work or life. **20 ALF**

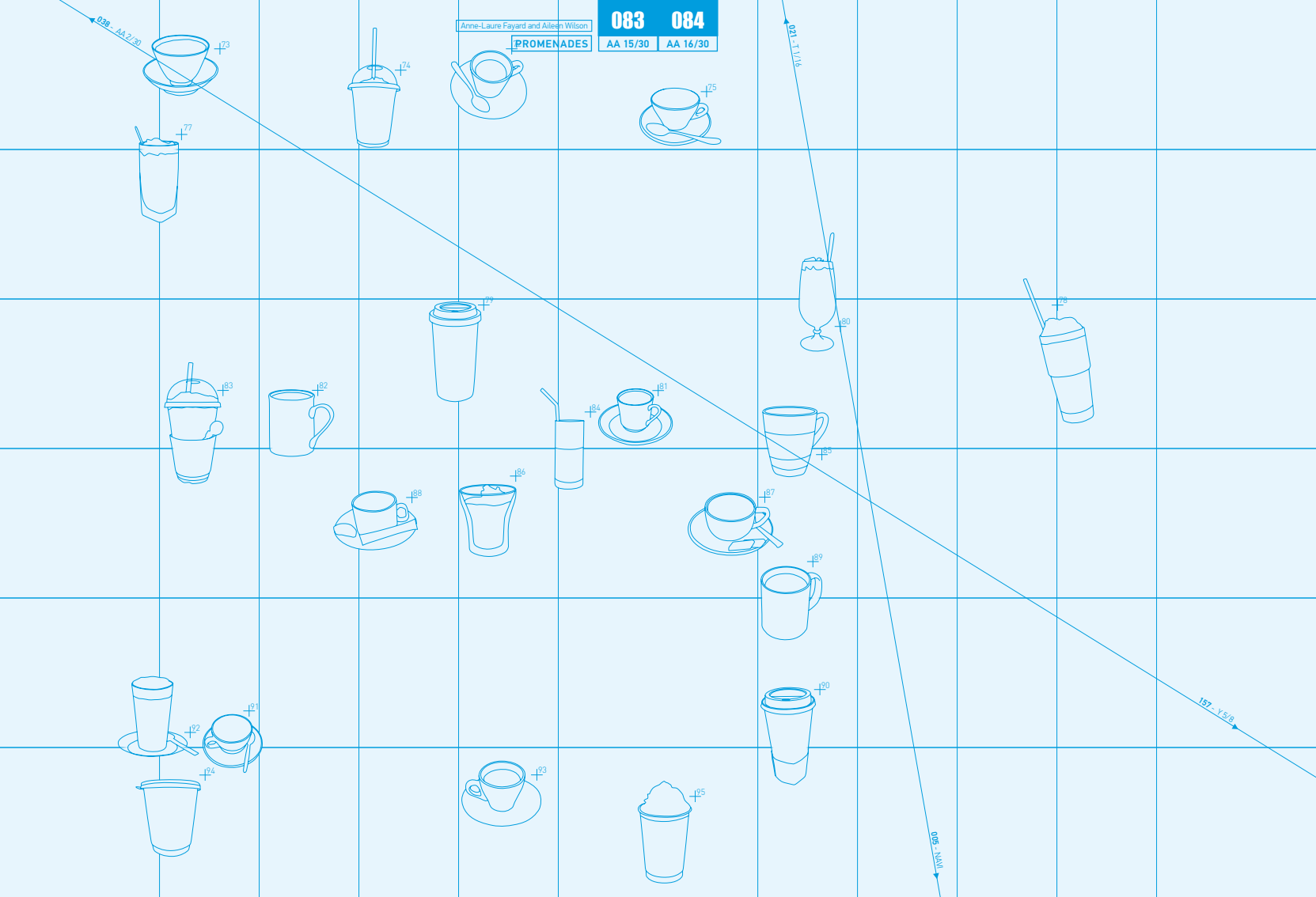
20 AW Yes, the act of sitting talking to a friend in a public space is very intimate. I met my best friend in London the other day in an outdoor café in front of a contemporary gallery. We came from New York and from Brighton to discuss our ageing bodies and the changing London streets.

When I moved to Singapore, I remember telling the real estate agent that I wanted to find an apartment in an area where we could walk to a coffee shop. The real estate agent, a very nice Chinese Singaporean, nodded but at the time I doubted whether she'd understood. I'm sure now that she hadn't. In Singapore, people don't go for coffee. Coffee shops are mostly for expats who have fancy coffee – which for me is not actually coffee. They often have iced coffee, as it's hot and humid, but I couldn't quit my usual black hot coffee ... I just made it more watery and started drinking Americano. When I went back to Paris, this became "un allongé" – the French version of the Americano. My friend Fabrizio was always shocked that I would drink this distorted version of the espresso. **21 ALF**

21 AW Yes, the palette adapts to the tastes of a new city. Peanut butter has replaced Marmite for me but people still ask me whether these new tastes feel like home.

They do feel like home to me. The original gets mixed up with the added version and the original palette has the charm of the past, but it's not enough to make me feel home. **22 ALF**

Talking about friends, coffee drinking is associated for me with people. I drink coffee but often I drink coffee with people. In Paris, one of my coffee buddies was Fabrizio. We would send an email to each other and meet at the bar on campus. In Singapore, there was a coffee machine in the copier room at the end of the corridor, so I had many lonely coffees. But in the morning I'd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have breakfast with my friend, Daniel. We'd both arrive early to the office and after checking email, I'd drop by his office, and we'd go down to the bar by the pound. Daniel never had coffee, but I always did. In New York, on campus, my coffee buddy was Bojan. On days when we had time, we would go to Victory, *a small corner coffee shop – 10 minutes walk from the campus, the perfect Brooklyn coffee shop for me.*

I had discovered Victory *a few weeks after moving to Brooklyn on the way to the office one day. Dropping my daughter at her daycare on Hoyt Street, I went down Hoyt Street and found* Victory *at the corner of Hoyt and State. It had great coffee and delicious apple turnovers, as good as the Paris ones... and I'm fussy about my apple turnovers! When I stopped dropping my daughter on Hoyt Street, I kept the same route just because of* Victory, *turning left on Wyckoff and then right on Hoyt instead of taking the more direct route – straight on Smith street.*

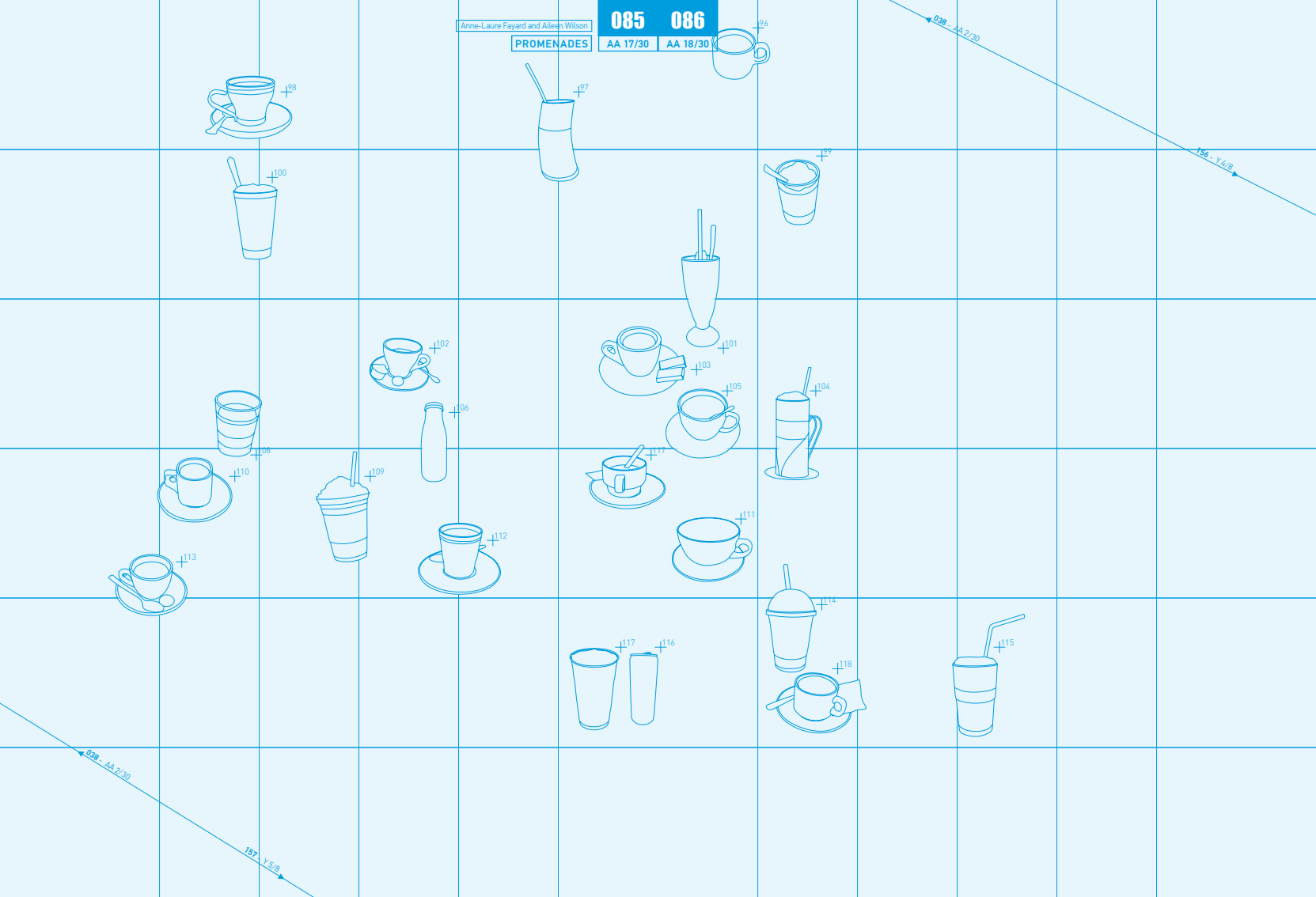
22 AW In all the places I've lived and with the jobs I've had, the moment of arriving at work is a memorable one. In London, arriving at work was a leisurely experience involving a trip to the kitchen, a chat with whomever was there and a cup of tea. Reminders to 'wash your mug and leave the kitchen tidy' would be everywhere. In Hong Kong, on Cheung Chau, it might mean a walk to get an iced coffee drunk on the way back. (I was self-employed by this point.) While in New York, it involves a large coffee with milk and no sugar, shouted across the diner as: 'A large, no,' that I carry across the road into work. There is only the radio for company when I arrive, no kitchen, no kettle and no signs saying to clean up after yourself. I miss that.

Of course, I can't write about coffee drinking and Brooklyn without talking about you. Our coffees in various coffee shops: Fall Café; *the* Tea Lounge; *the small Italian coffee shop at the corner of Carroll and Court ... ; and the* Starbucks *on Smith Street nearby* Atlantic, *where we met regularly for several months, while we were working on our installation project together. But coffee is also about walking in the neighborhood with you and discussing ideas, or sitting in the park in front of the school while your daughter was playing. I learnt that you take your coffee "white" although in NY nobody understands what it means. You take your coffee and then you'll add your milk. When I first went to get a coffee in London and I was asked 'white or black', I smiled internally and thought of you. Now each time I mention black, it's a little connection to you.* **23 ALF**

23 AW Yes, you're talking of the days when I don't go to work. Coffee is "light" not "white", when will I get that! Anyway on those days, I stay in the neighborhood and enjoy the streets. Yes, we liked to walk these streets discussing all the other streets we have known and enjoyed. We've made many decisions walking and sitting, decisions about our jobs, our installation, and our lives walking those fifteen blocks. We sit a lot too and often work. The first time I took a laptop to a café was in Italy around the time we met, when we meet now at least one of us has a laptop with us.

Coffee drinking in Paris is associated with many friends. One of them is my old friend, Marguerite. We've met so often on so many occasions, in so many places, that it is difficult to list them. I guess a bit like Finlay and you. My coffee partner in Paris before moving to New York was my friend, Karine, who lived a few blocks from me. We often had a twenty-minute coffee in the morning before going to work, at Prune, a café close to Canal St Martin. I remember going down Smith Street in Brooklyn on sunny mornings and text messaging her: 'Nice day, coffee at Prune in half an hour?' In fact, we even had a Skype coffee one day: We were both drinking coffee, but once again it was more about the chatting experience. **24 ALF**

24 AW Hey, I find myself doing that with you too, but at home and with a cup of tea!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Enjoying a coffee, sitting idly, looking at passer-bys or chatting with a friend. I remember this article an American journalist **25 ALF**

wrote about his experience in Paris. He could not understand that people could just sit in a café with no laptop, not doing

anything. Daydreaming and watching didn't seem like options to him. I guess that's why I loved Victory *because cell phones*

and computers weren't welcome. In front of the coffee shop, there were always people drinking their coffee chatting or reading

the papers, and small kids playing.

Victory *was for me a great materialization of the experience, although I originally never stopped there but always bought my*

coffee to take away. It was very different from the cafés of my high school and college years: the typical cafés of the Quartier

Latin *in Paris, big spaces, quite anonymous, not really cosy.* Victory *represented better what having coffee means to me. I real-*

ize we've never been there together. It was not on the path of our walks in the neighborhood. We'll go next time I'm in Brooklyn.

25 AW That would be nice, but you know I would like the anonymity of those Paris cafés or even the ambient noise of *Victory*. Where

I feel uncomfortable is in the *Fall café*, for example, the café near the children's school where I know so many people. This

has echoes of my first "home", the small town filled with my extended family where I grew up. I never came to New York

to know everyone in the local café, but rather to be in the local café, not known, working and ordering the same breakfast

every morning.

I can't write about coffee drinking without mentioning one of my oldest coffee partners, Guilhem. When we met I realized that **26 ALF**

he was drinking as much coffee as I was, and this became a part of our relationship, a joke among our friends. We shared

so many coffees sitting in coffee shops, terraces, in Paris, Singapore, New York, London, but also in Buenos Aires, Berlin, Am-

sterdam, Boston, Rome, or Santiago, etc. During our travels in Asia, drinking coffee was hard. We longed for it, but we kept the

experience – the chatting, exchanging ideas, reading, arguing sometimes, and laughing other times.

As I write about what drinking coffee evokes for me, I can't avoid thinking of Proust's little madeleine. Coffee is my madeleine;

it triggers memories of moments, people, and locations. It's not so much about coffee per se, but about coffee drinking as a

socio-material practice, enacted and interpreted differently by different people in various locations. What we've been writing

about is what coffee drinking evokes for us – that is: How can it become an evocative object that includes the memories of

cities, spaces and the people we were interacting with. The coffee could disappear: It could be tea, hot water or juice ... However

because of the practices with which it is entangled (for example, in Paris, there are cafés and not pubs; people drink coffee

and not tea; and, as we have noted there, is a whole history of intellectuals debating and sharing ideas in cafés), the fact that

it is coffee matters, in some ways.

26 AW Yes, the fact that it is coffee certainly does! In Nicaragua for example, a home of coffee, coffee was hard to come by. When

found, it was weak, pale and tasteless. All the best coffee was kept for export.

Similarly, in Sri Lanka, we were told that the tea drunk there was not very good, since all the good tea was exported. **27 ALF**

In Paris, now people use their bicycles a lot – their own, or Velib, *a bike renting system. You can pick up a bike at La Bastille and*

drop it in Montparnasse. I used to have an old bicycle in Paris. At that time, there were no special lanes. I also like walking as

it allows for a semi-day dreaming. It's harder, more dangerous, on a bike. I love going through cities walking; de-ambulating

– from Latin, "deambulare": to take a walk; walk abroad; in French, "déambuler": stroll around; in English, to deambulate: walk

abroad. For me, it's both the walk and the idleness.

It's also interesting how suddenly cities change shapes and sizes as you live in them. I remember visiting a friend when I was

in my third year of college. She was living in the eleventh, East of Paris, on the Right bank. I had always lived on the Left bank.

I took a bus from Montparnasse. It seemed to me like a long ride, a discovery of a different world, an adventure. Six years later, I moved to live on the Right bank, and I ended up living only a couple of blocks from her place. Taking the same bus ride but in the opposite direction – from Menilmontant to Montparnasse – it seemed a short ride. It's now for me as close as Carroll Garden in Brooklyn, or Ardmore Park in Singapore. Distances and space intermeshed in memories and tinted perceptions. You're telling me about how you went around London on your bike and I'm planning on getting one.

27 AW Yes, from my bike, I really enjoy the city as I feel that I'm both a participant and an observer. In London, I liked crossing the bridges at night or whizzing around Trafalgar Square. And in Brooklyn, cycling along the tree-lined, brownstone streets always gets the mornings off to a good start.

I remember one day of August, biking home from the campus. It was a nice warm early evening. There were only few cars and I smiled to myself. I felt light and free. I had this same sense of freedom in Singapore too. I love this feeling of being a foreigner. People have expectations: I am "the French woman". Sometimes they find me "so French"; other times "so non-French". This means I can make mistakes, that I'm not supposed to follow all the rules because it's not assumed I know them. Being the other can sometimes be frustrating but for me it's mostly liberating, a sense of freedom – a no man's land where I can reinvent myself. **28 ALF**

28 AW Yes, I've felt the freedom of being a foreigner too. Kundera, in the novel Ignorance, put it well when he says that when we move we 'slough off whatever [we] dislike and feel lighter, freer.' I certainly have.

Yet, I don't want to downplay the difficult moments involved in moving. Sometimes this feeling of freedom disappears and then you're just wondering: Why did I move? Every single thing seems so complex; everything has to be learnt again. I remember when I told your friend Andreas we were moving to London, he said he would not move again, 'Why would I? I've been in New York for more than fifteen years. I have all my friends. I know how things work.' While I struggle now to understand the rules of the game in London, I often think of these words. It also shows me how the place shapes your sense of identity. As I wander in the city, trying to understand it, I'm also questioning myself about where home is, what home is, and why I keep running away. You were telling me about how you find it tiresome to be the "other". I might not have been away for long enough, or it might just be that being the "other" brings me more than it does you. "Being away", people always expect that you'll come back but then they realize that you might not come back, and they don't really know what to do with you. You are part of their lives without really being part of them. **29 ALF**

39 AW Initially I enjoyed what you're describing, the freedom of being "the other". Now I miss the ease that comes from same-ness and not difference. I am tired of responding to the question 'are you Irish?' With, 'no, I am Scottish.' Maybe I've been here too long!

This sometimes creates a sense of loss – losing people that you liked, even if you're meeting new ones. It is also that your "self" might dissolve in some ways – a French person who has lived abroad for several years, a Scot who left twenty years ago and is losing her accent. I think you still have an accent, but I guess to your parents and friends in Scotland, you're losing it. A good friend of mine, an English woman, who has lived in Asia for more than twenty-five years, working for several American companies, was telling me how her family felt betrayed by her losing her British accent. It made me smile; she sounded so British to me! **30 ALF**

Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson

PROMENADES

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30 AW Yes, my family cringes when I say anything that sounds American. I like to say that my accent is somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic. I left Scotland twenty-three years ago, it is a miracle I sound Scottish at all! To my parents losing that accent would symbolize that I was no longer Scottish. Kundera suggests that cities themselves "re-shape" language. I agree and I find I am now adept at living among many "English's".

I'm not losing my French accent when I speak English although people sometimes aren't sure where I'm from: foreign, but not necessarily French. Here in London, I sound American ... More than accent for me, language is the thing that I might lose. I met this French lady who's been in New York for fifty years. She could still speak French with a strong Southern accent. Yet, she was not comfortable speaking French, and at times it was easier for both of us to speak English. Her daughter did not speak French. I still speak French, but I have to say that I write it less and less. In some situations (work but also for some emotions), English comes more easily. Yet when I'm scolding my kids in French, they know I'm really angry. If language is part of our identity, the question might be: Am I losing a part of my self? I feel more like I've added layers to myself. There are feelings, ideas, that seem easier to describe, or even to grasp in English, while for others French is more powerful. **31 ALF**

31 AW Yes, more layers, more complex layers but for me, layers disappear too as new ones are added. I have forgotten my way around the center of London for example now and my Spanish is rusty. There are Scottish words and expressions that I no longer use. Maybe the layers don't disappear, but some certainly dissolve. However, some also converge with new layers. I remember moments in London as I walk around New York, for example, or I use the word "gwylo" meaning foreign devil (used to describe expats in Hong Kong) to describe the gentrify-ers in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Indeed layers don't add up clearly, neatly; they are fuzzy, blurring into each other. As we add some, we lose some, but isn't this true of any experience? As we grow older, we add experiences but we forget some. We can't grasp all of our life's experiences in clear and perfect memories. Would we want to? It reminds me of that Borges' text about a man who could remember everything, but thus ended up not being able to live in the present as the weight of the past overwhelmed him. I don't think the layers disappear; they erode, merging into one another. These layers are there in the background, and they color your new experiences even if you're not aware of it. As I was writing, I looked for Borges' text. I searched through my books but their arrangement is different here than in New York, and so I couldn't find it. I'm not sure if I'm not mixing two stories together, but does it really matter? **32 ALF**

32 AW Probably not. Yes, I think these layers of experience merge and they colour the present. The expression 'out-of-country and... out-of-language"[9] describes, in a sense, what it is that I enjoy about being mobile and moving. I enjoy feeling inside and outside of a place at the same time. It is maybe not as much an issue to me of home or where or what home is, it is more the feeling of freedom that being "out-of..." offers.

[9] Rushdie, S. 1991. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism.* Great Britain: Granta

My friend, Anca, speaks French perfectly, but we speak English since we were working in an Anglophone environment when we met. Even now, while she lives in Paris, with a French speaking husband, I can't speak French with her. The few times we do, because we are surrounded by French speaking people, it feels awkward. My friend, Daniel, also speaks perfect French but we met in Singapore, always spoke English, and I can't speak French with him. When he speaks French, his voice-pitch changes, his body language too. I don't recognize him! Language, people, relationship and location: Once again all entangled. I think of my kids. Are they French? Yes, they are. They have French passports. Is this enough to make you French? They are French, but they aren't really. When listing his nationalities, my son always adds English because he speaks English. In fact, **33 ALF**

Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson

PROMENADES

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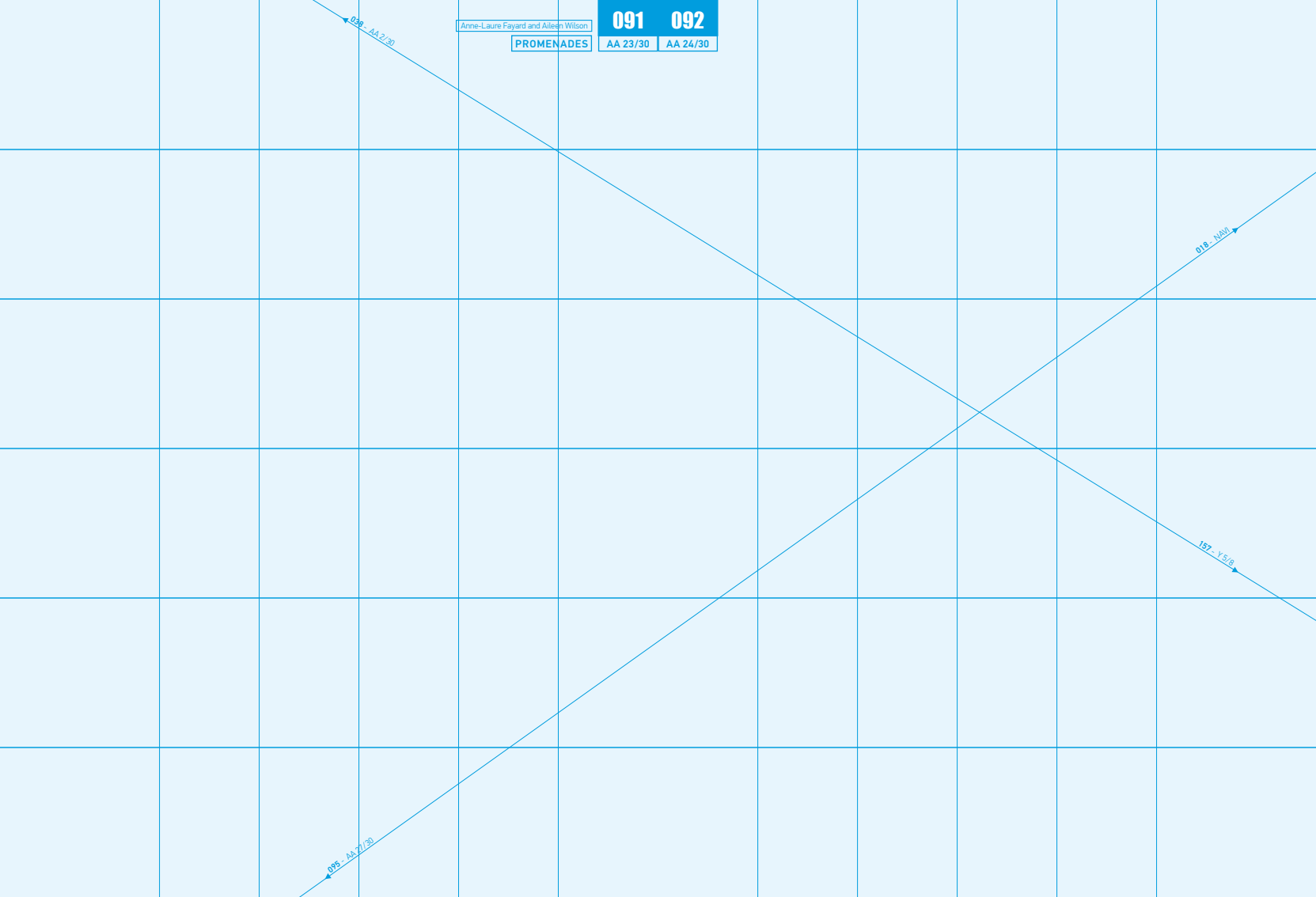

English is his main language, what one calls his mother-tongue, although it's not mine. When he was three, he thought he was Singaporean. My daughter was born in Nepal and speaks English and French. She says she's French but she lived in France only six months. She speaks English better than French. Here in London, they're the Americans because of their accent. This reminds me of your telling me: 'I'm Scottish, and a mother of American children. They were born in New York, always lived there and have an American father. The language is the same - although the accent varies.' Yet, I understand when you say you would like them to know something about Scotland – the Scottish part of you, and here it's not so much the national part of it.

33 AW I'm not sure. I think I want them to know something about Scotland. I'm not sure what that "something" would be. I can't quantify, name, describe and share the Scottish side of me. It exists and doesn't exist in a sense. I was intimate with a certain Scotland, a place and people, at a certain time. I can certainly teach them songs, poems, though...

Does it exist for anyone? I'm wondering if a neo-nomadic experience is not only emphasizing questions that everyone can ask, yet most of the time don't ask because they are not aware of them. If you were to ask your sister why she feels Scottish, she might refer to her passport, to the fact that she's always lived in Scotland. She might be right, but is all this what makes her Scottish? I have no answer here, and there may be no answer – only a process, a journey, an endless one in the same way that the psychoanalytic process is infinite. **34 ALF**

34 AW Yes, I agree. Questions are brought up by the mere fact of moving, ones which do not have to be asked when one does not move. I think there are distinctions here as a result of moving between what becomes invisible to one, i.e. Scottish-ness, with what becomes more visible to others i.e. my Scottish-ness. One does not have to move countries, though, to experience this, internal borders are enough. Borders of class, ethnicity, and neighbourhood can force one into visibility. In Scotland I was a highlander I suppose. In London, I became Scottish working class. In China, I became a white Caucasian. I always related to the idea of border-crossers as those who mix well.

It's a complex and subtle mix of emotions, behaviors, feelings – your imaginary Scotland. Home is not your village or Aberdeen where you went to school, but home comprises some of the moments you lived, people you met, emotions you felt in these places. **35 ALF**

35 AW Yes, in place of a dream-England, I have my dream-Scotland! I like to say that I (and my accent) are the sum total of all the places I have lived and all the people I have met. I mentioned Simone De Beauvoir earlier I think, and I mention her again because it was around the time I read her that I began to believe that, since art was not bound by national borders, I could belong anywhere or perhaps I just feel my home to be among ideas rather than places.

Paris is not home, yet it constitutes me. The memory of my walks in Parisian streets, of the cafés I went to, the friends I had. This summer we were on a bus with my kids and I showed them my high school, pointed to La Sorbonne, to the café, where I went after classes, the one where I often ate, etc. My daughter looked at me surprised and said, 'You know so many things here!' Sharing these little things with her is important to me as I'm sharing My Paris with her. **36 ALF**

36 AW As I was cycling to work in Brooklyn this morning, I was thinking of colonial Hong Kong and how, in many ways, it felt like home. While I did not speak Cantonese, there was so much that was very British. Schools with children in blue uniforms looked like the ones I had attended; post offices reminded me of The Royal Mail, and the Queen's portrait was ubiquitous.

Anne-Laure Fayard and Aileen Wilson

PROMENADES

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Strangely, a trip to Macau felt like home too, with the Portuguese streets and the availability of cheese and pastry shops. When I first came to New York, a similar feeling of home or familiarity emerged, and I had a strange sensation of having been here before. Sitting in a diner one day, looking at a group of men sitting in a row on high stools, wearing baseball caps, checked shirts and jeans, and eating cowboy style (using only a fork held in their right hand), it dawned on me. Movies! I had seen those scenes before in movies.

Funny, I had the exact same feeling the first time I went to New York: a strange familiarity and, like you, I realized that I'd seen it all in movies!

Your feeling of familiarity in colonial Hong Kong makes me think of the reverse experience of one of my Singaporean friends for whom it felt familiar in London. Interesting back-and-forth movement, which once again highlights how things are never clear-cut. It also reminds us of the impact of colonial history – how locations are not only made of our individual experiences, but that they also involve history, politics and economics. It sometimes matters more than we think. When I arrived in Singapore, I had a Malay secretary. One day I told her that I was surprised because, before I moved, I'd heard so much about how policed Singapore was, but I did not really feel it. In fact, I saw fewer policemen in Singapore, than in Paris, New York or London. Her reply to my questions was: 'of course, you're white!' Until recently, traveling for Anca (because she was Romanian) was costly and required some planning as she needed visas to go nearly everywhere, except Cuba. Bojan, who's Macedonian, decided not to stop in London on his way back from Macedonia to New York because of the cost and hurdle of the visa. For me, with a French passport, traveling is pretty easy.

37 ALF

37 AW Yes, there is the politics. When I said I felt at home in colonial Hong Kong, I meant like you said that it was familiar. I didn't feel at home with the privilege that white people enjoyed in Hong Kong at that time – the higher salaries, for example, or the bigger homes higher up the Peak. I read somewhere that one is 'a product of the historical process to date' and that one should take an inventory. Living in Hong Kong certainly made me aware of that inventory.

IN THE MAZE OF OUR IMAGINED MEMORY

ALF: *As you visit a city, some places evoke other places. You keep connecting emotions and places. I remember walking one evening in the Lower East nearby Tompkins square. It was a warm summer evening, people walking in the street, bars with open doors and loud music, drunken people sitting on the pavement. It reminded me of rue* Oberkampf *in the eleventh in Paris, while the West Village would remind me of the* Marais *in Paris. This summer, I was having dinner by the river in Chicago – a hot and humid summer night, a small café with a couple of tables by the water and new buildings across, boats going down the river – and suddenly I was not in Chicago anymore, but in Singapore, having dinner on Boat Quay. In fact, it's more complex than that. The buildings around, the lights, the river reminded me of Boat Quay, but the small table, my feet in a somewhat sandy ground reminded me of dining by the sea, still in Singapore. The experience was so strong that the next day "seeing" my friend Paula on Skype, I told her I was in Singapore, instead of Chicago!*
AW: Yes, the connections I make between places make perfect sense to me. It goes on in my mind wherever I am. Who was it that said, 'the past is always home'? Maybe the moving makes the past very comforting or perhaps making connections to other places is very comforting. In *Invisible Cities*, one of the travellers asks another if he always advances with his head turned back. **ALF:** *I sometimes feel annoyed about this tendency to find similarities – 'it reminds me of', 'it looks like' – as if I were not able to enjoy the difference, the unknown, without trying to control it by labelling and comparing it. Yet it might just be a normal tendency, the way our mind works,* building on, connecting, *and* comparing. *What is interesting is how during the first trips, the comparison point is "home" – the place we were born, spent our childhood, or went to school – but this home evolves, it grows as the travels add up and our comparisons become more complex and subtle. And when you go back "home", it is reinterpreted in the light of all these other places you visited and inhabited. Sometimes you might feel at a loss as home does not fulfil your expectations. People and things have changed, and you have changed and you don't know who to blame, if there's anyone to blame! Even if you don't have expectations, or only fears, you might still feel at a loss, as I was when I arrived in Paris this summer after moving from Brooklyn to London, and spending two weeks in London. I could not tell where was home. Brooklyn was my emotional home, where I had my friends, my mores and habits, to where I longed to return. London was my physical home (although I was not there at that point) as my house (interesting distinction between "house" and "home") contained all my stuff - books, pictures, clothes, etc. Paris was my "biological" home. I lived there all my childhood and teenager years. For my family and my friends, this is "my home", maybe the home I run away from, but the home I belong to, that defines me, the one most of them want to see me in.* **AW:** I find constant comparing annoying too, especially when backpacking, as I like to immerse myself in a place.
ALF: *... Imaginary home is to be added ... imaginary or ideal home ... the one that we take with us, the one we dream of ... I guess the ones neo-nomads are looking for ... in a similar way that we are dreaming of those ideal parents we will never have. As we travel and live in different places, our memories of walks, experiences, encounters and emotions merge as we try to make sense of these by connecting them – through memories, similarities and contrasts. Cities, and places, belong to us as much as we belong to us. We become part of this 'global village' described by Pico Iyer. If you think of our perceptions and memories as a melting pot, it might seem an impoverished experience where places lose their edges*

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and specificity, blurring into a vague picture. Yet, I want to think of it as a patchwork, a multitude of vignettes each of them reflecting partly the other; a maze, the maze of our memory, where we can jump from one street to another street without any specific reason other than that both feel the same or are so radically different. It reminds me of the power of words for the narrator in 'À la recherche du temps perdu' where he tells how names – of cities, of people – have an evocative power for him, often leading to his disappointment: The Princess de Parme is not a pretty princess of fairy tales, but an old lady, not even charming! **AW:** Nice, yes. I think there are the iconic forms of a city, the forms that are renowned for it in particular: the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty. In other words, the postcard city. I like to visit these places, to kind of authenticate the place for myself. But there is something else too, in *Invisible Cities* the narrator, reflecting on how one always imagines the ideal city, talks of choosing the city that corresponds to one's desires, contemplating it and imagining one's reflection in it. I go to these iconic forms to, kind of, enter into the city, to become part of its public context. It would be as if there were a blurring of audience and performer, participant and observer, a bit like the artist, Dan Graham's, architectural pavilions that use mirrors to blur the distinction between observer and observed. I look at the city and I see myself in it. Renzo Piano (the Italian builder/architect) talks of building for people's dreams as much as for their shelter. It strikes me that central to my nomadism is the city. However, I don't just look at the city and see myself in it, I become it. I take on its behaviors. Once a friend of mine, a police detective, came to visit New York from Jamaica. We were walking up 6th avenue, and he was walking so slowly that I feared he might be arrested for loitering! I walk to the speed of 6th avenue now. I learned to walk to the speed of Kowloon in Hong Kong too. I don the behaviors of a place to become part of that place.

– – –

As we move from place to place with the accompanying feelings, sensations and memories, we have in our bags a few evocative objects – a book, a notebook, a photo, an old sweater, or an iPod with songs we like. We carry *within us* evocative places, places formed by the people we've met, discussions we've had, and sensations we've felt. Our home is the city, any one of *our* cities, but "home" is actually in our imagination and is formed there, around, through and *by way of* the urban imaginary and the socio-material practices of *our* cities. As neo-nomads change cities, their sense of home evolves – growing in some ways, shrinking in others. Location, space, disappear behind a sense of place: What matters is the process, the mobility across places and the experiences and memories in these places that build up and combine into a sense of home.

When we began writing we thought that 'neo-nomads' and 'global souls'[10] were synonyms, we argue now that they describe the same people but from two different perspectives. 'Neo-nomad' describes the life style, points to the mobility and the location, while 'global souls' reminds us of the complexity of the experience and the constant search for "home". Home is never *here* or *there*, but it is the ongoing experience of dreaming and creating a *sense of* home.

As human identity is inherently linked to a place[11], thus contemporary nomadism raises questions about identity: What happens to the self when it is not in one but rather in multiple locations? Different types of nomadic identity can be defined through the relationship between physical, mental and digital mobilities[12]. For neo-nomads, we argue, identity is formed by way of this constant shift between physical and mental mobility. As we have moved, we have learnt to enjoy the shifting sense of self, the constant relative-ness of the truth of the experiences[13], the 'wide-awakeness'[14] offered by being 'out of country' or even 'out of language'[15]. With no fixed locale, identity becomes fluid, more complex, but still embodied and situated, here *and* there.

10 **Iyer, P.** 2001. *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing

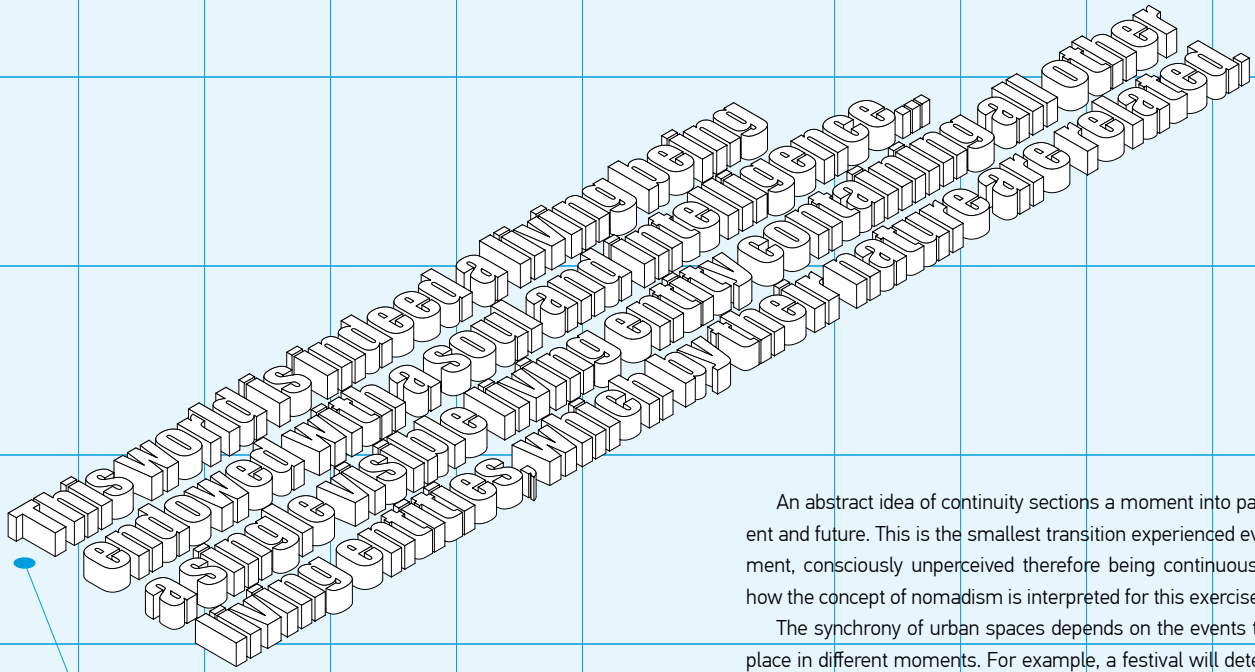
11 Ibid. p 038 footnote 4

12 **Abbas, Y.** 2009. 'The neo-nomad, the figure of post-modernity' Lecture at CIID, Copenhagen Institute for Interaction Design January 13, 2009

13/15 Ibid. p 038 footnote 1

14 **Greene, M.** 1997. Lecture at The Arts and Social Vision Conference, Teacher's College, Columbia University

quote chosen by Bernardo Risquez
Plato. 4th century BCE. *Timaeus.*

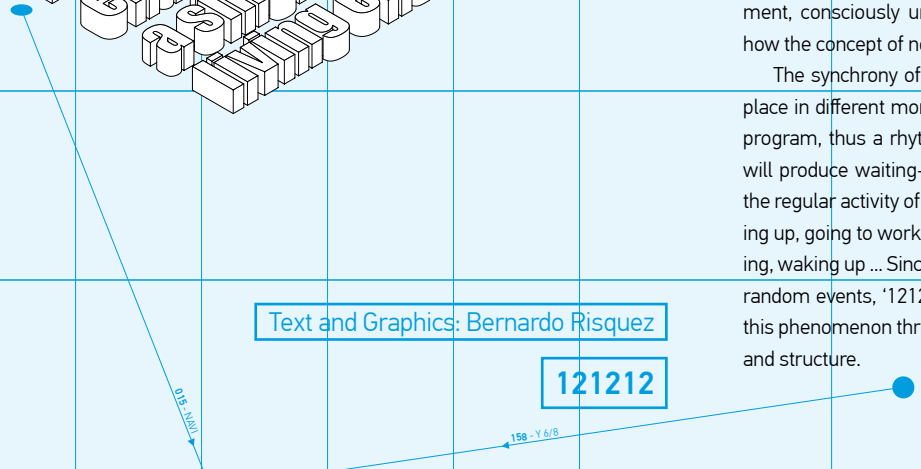


An abstract idea of continuity sections a moment into past, present and future. This is the smallest transition experienced every moment, consciously unperceived therefore being continuous. This is how the concept of nomadism is interpreted for this exercise.

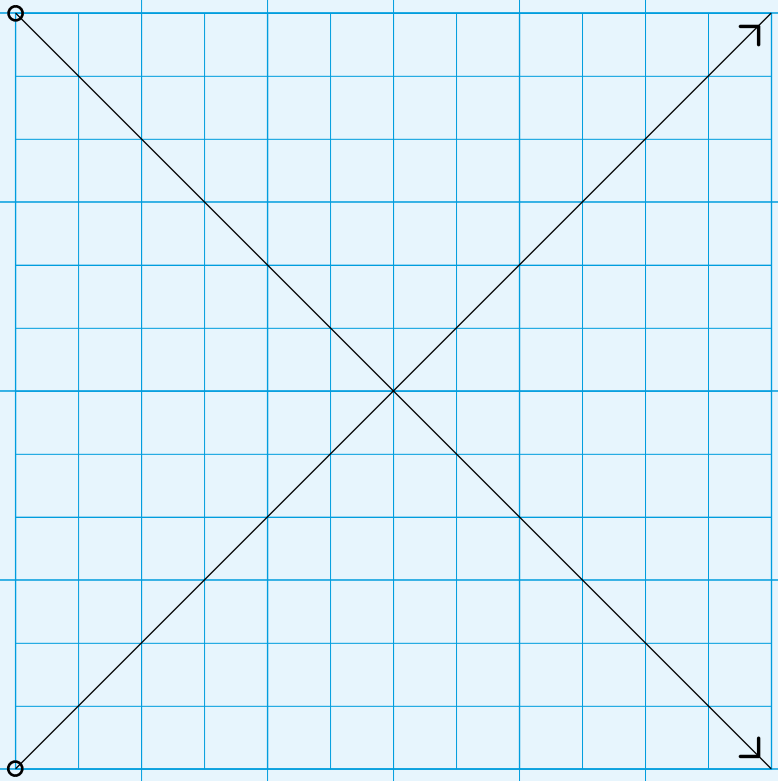
The synchrony of urban spaces depends on the events that take place in different moments. For example, a festival will determine a program, thus a rhythm of activities and the space between events will produce waiting-hours, in cafés etc. Another example could be the regular activity of the everyday life of humans living in cities: waking up, going to work, lunch-break, work continued, going out, sleeping, waking up ... Since we can make abstractions of these precise but random events, '121212' is an attempt to explore the possibilities of this phenomenon through the use of simple rules that generate form and structure.

Text and Graphics: Bernardo Risquez

121212



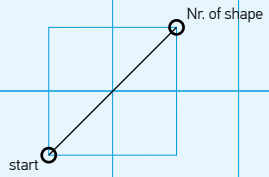
12



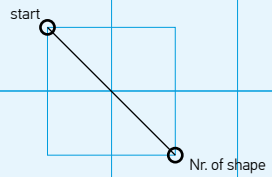
This is the basic shape for the first part of the 121212 sets. It is intended to follow synchrony with the moment in which decisions are taken to draw each shape.

The rules for drawing the 12 shapes are the following:

1. Choose one of two main diagonals (use the same for all drawings).
2. Start drawing left (lower or upper determined by diagonal chosen).
3. Always use vertices (corners) and stick to key points in the grid.
4. Number of points in the right corners (lower or upper determined by diagonal chosen) matches the number of the shape.
5. Close the shape with point number 12.
6. Whatever happens inside is up to you.



diagonal 1



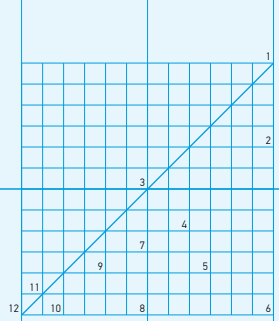
diagonal 2

Note:
Point 1 and point 12 are special cases, both a beginning and an end.
The following drawings are an example of what may result.

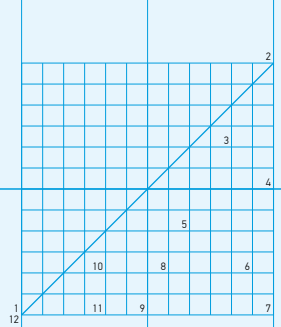
Bernardo Risquez

121212

103	104
B 5/22	B 6/22



1



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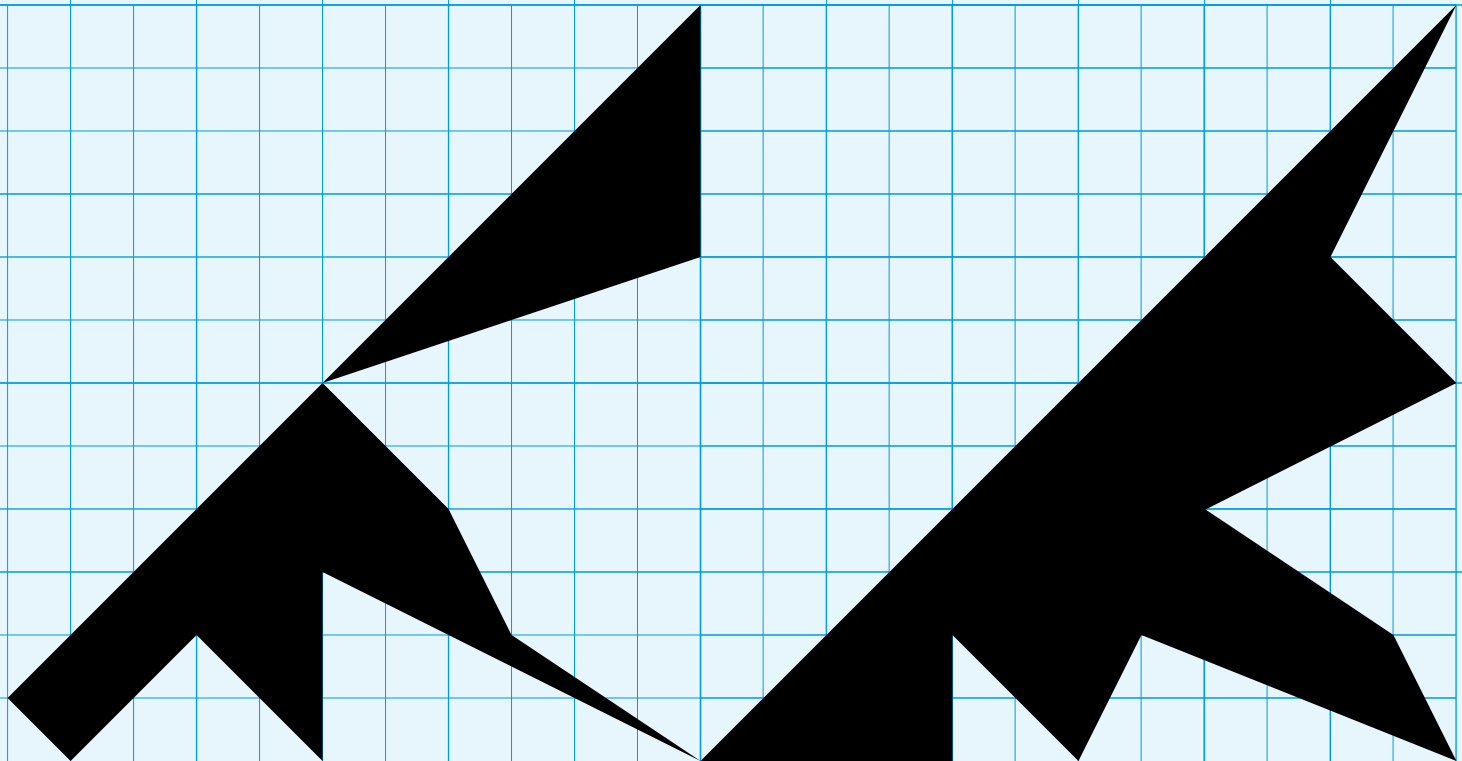

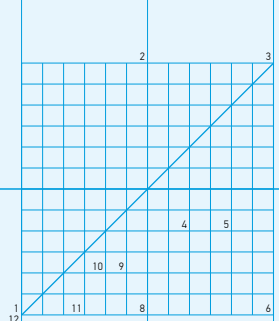

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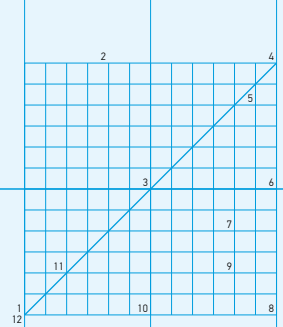

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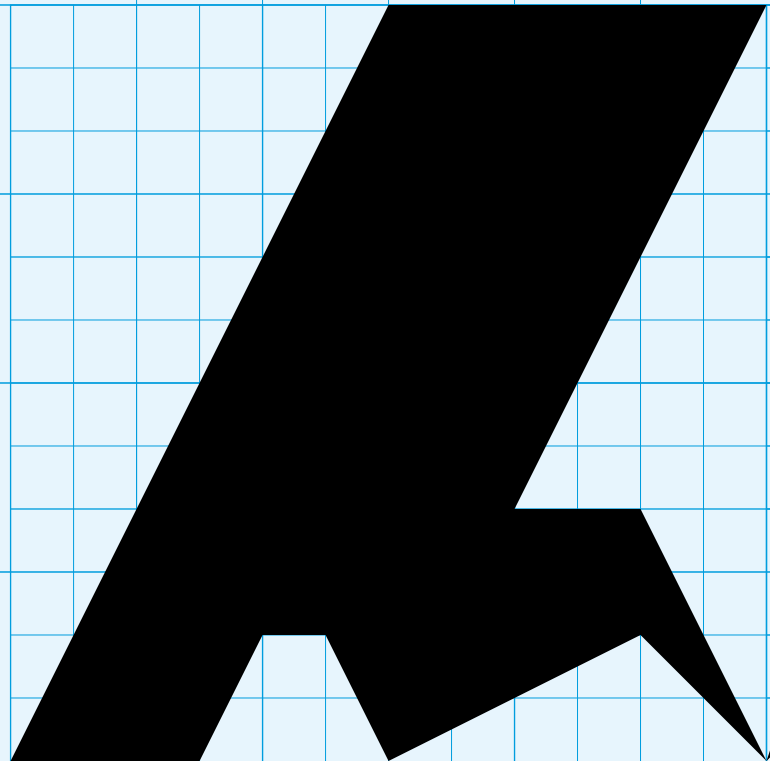

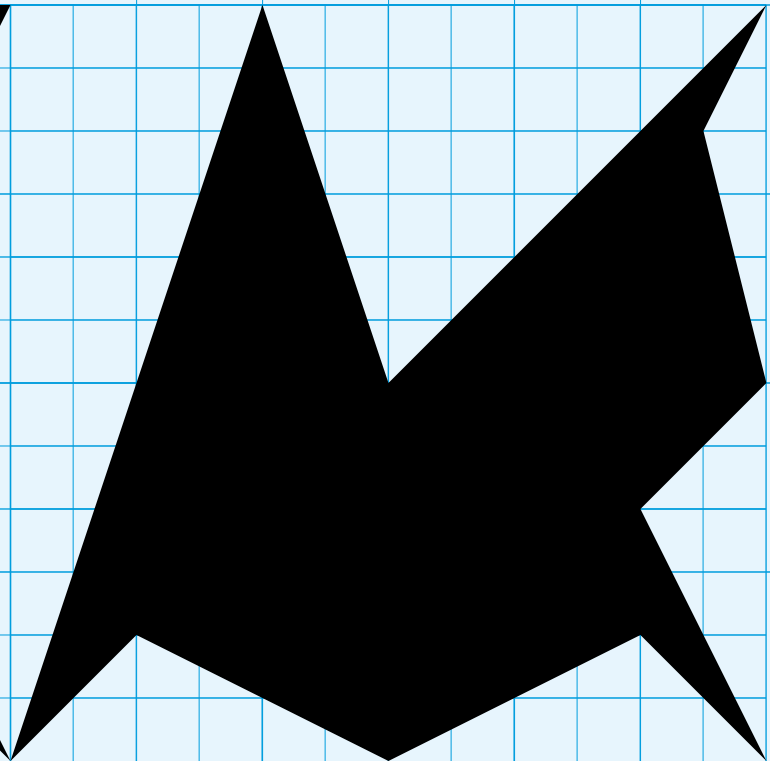

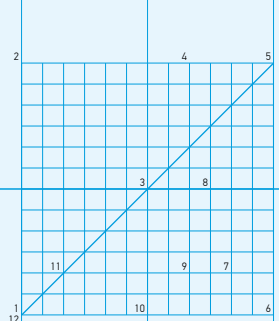

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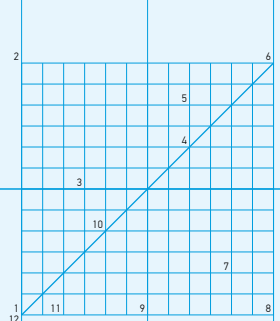

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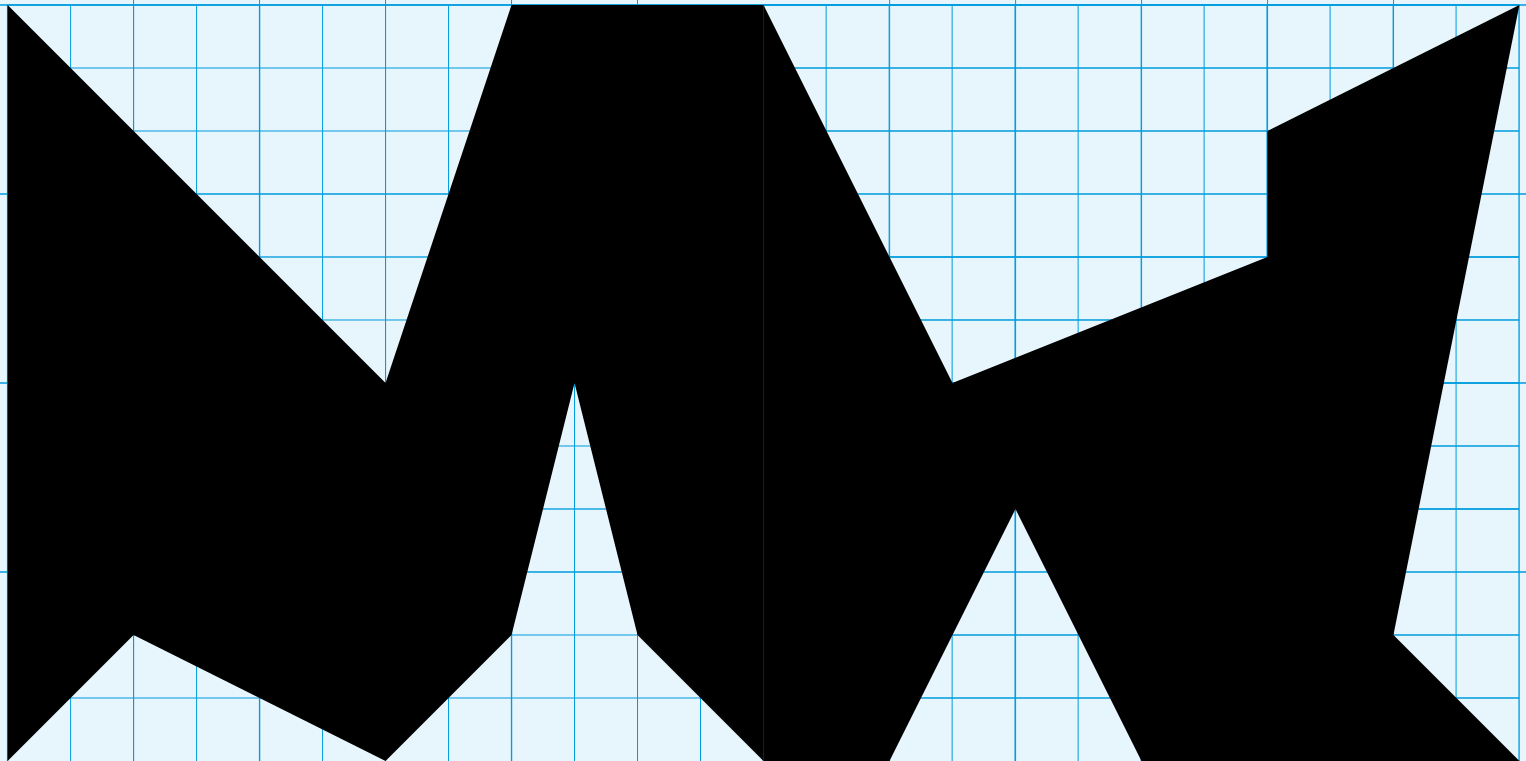
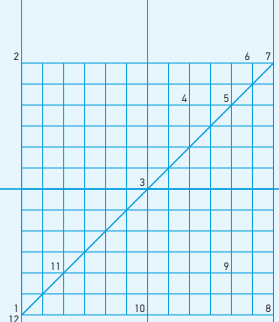


Bernardo Risquez

121212

109 | 110

B 11/22 | B 12/22



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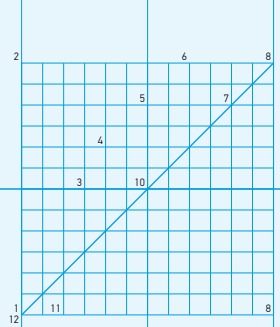
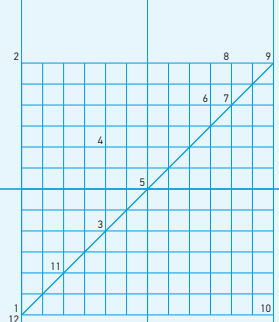


8

Bernardo Risquez

121212

111	112
B 13/22	B 14/22



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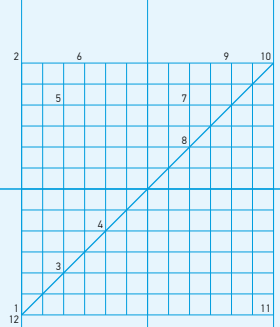

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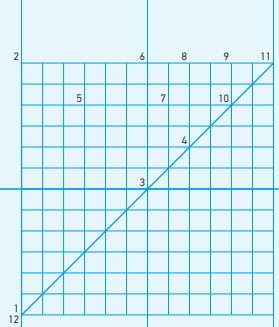

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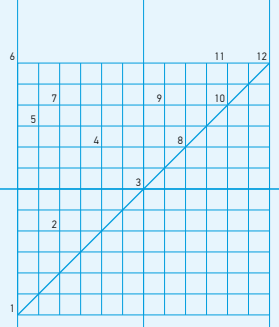

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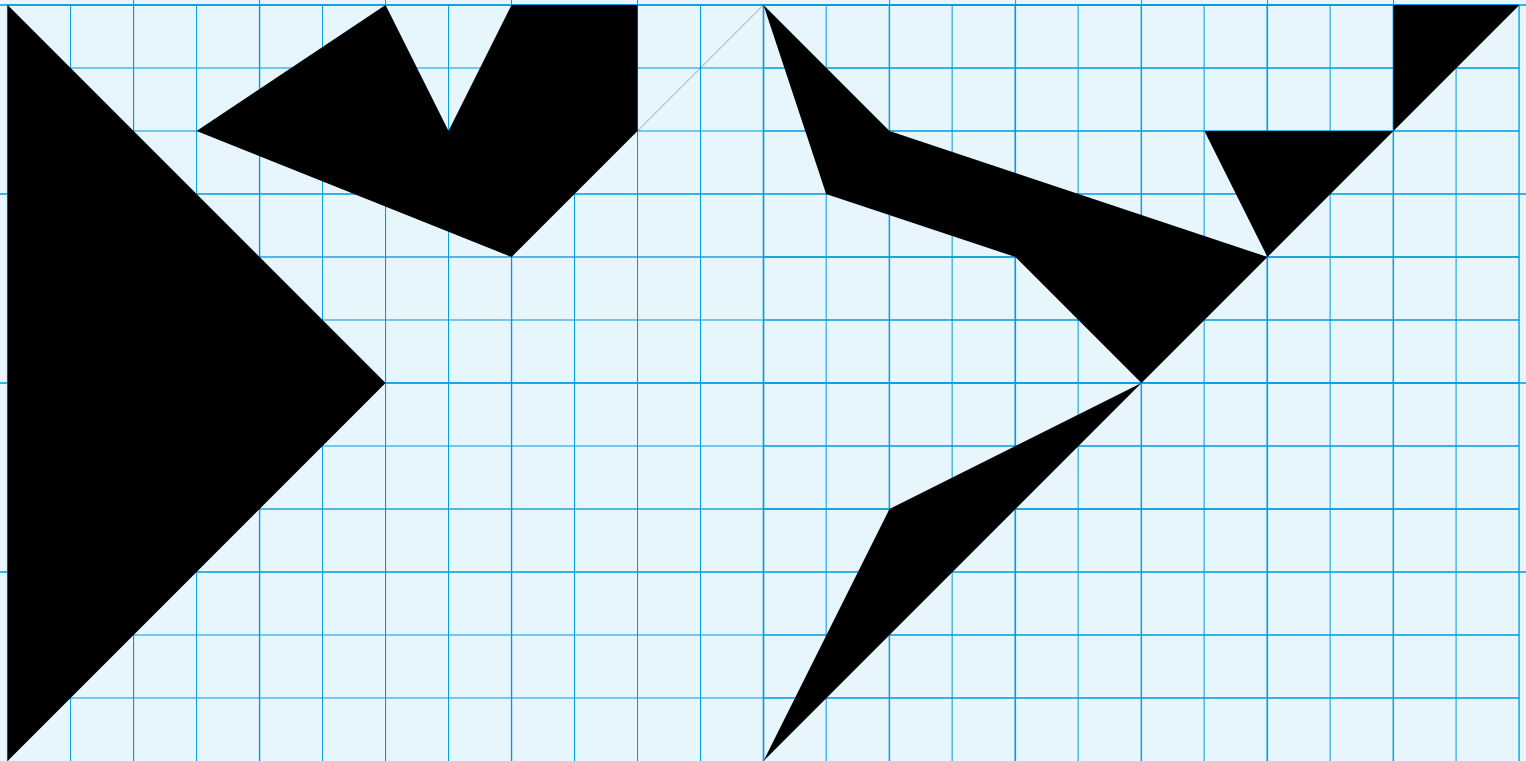


1212

Set of 12 possible drawings

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

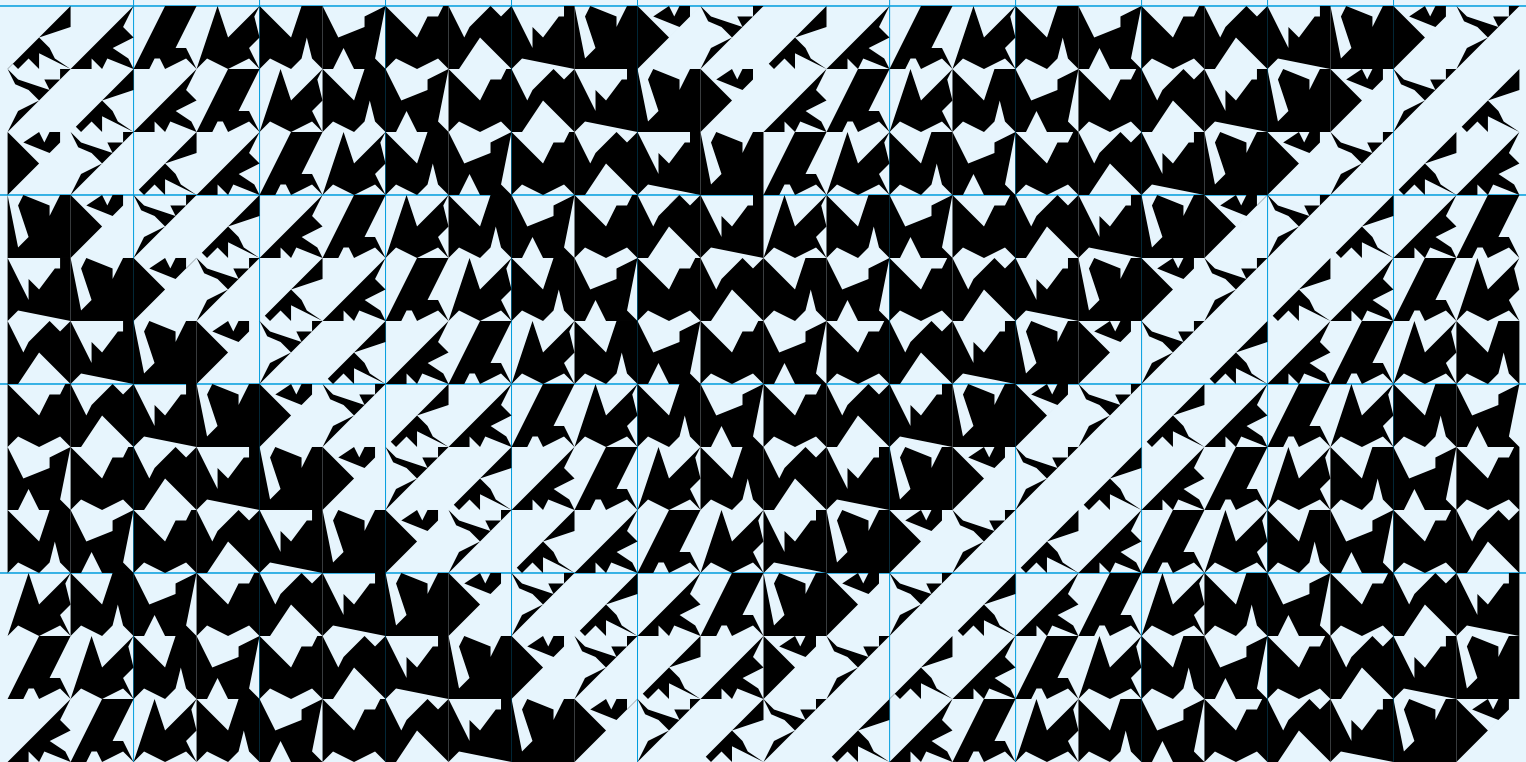
121212

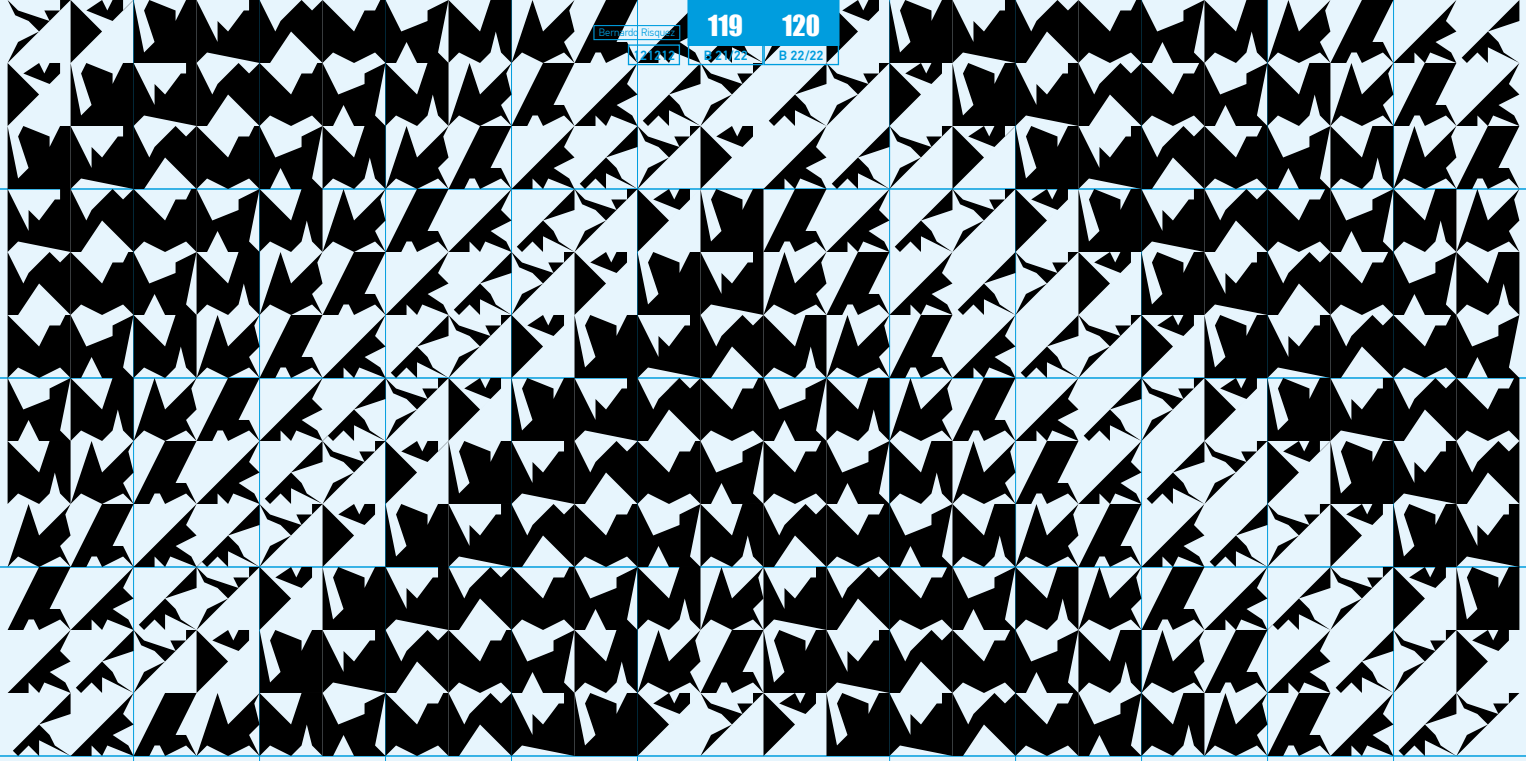
Based on the rules of twelve tone music, this matrix is then used to make up a new one out of four.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1

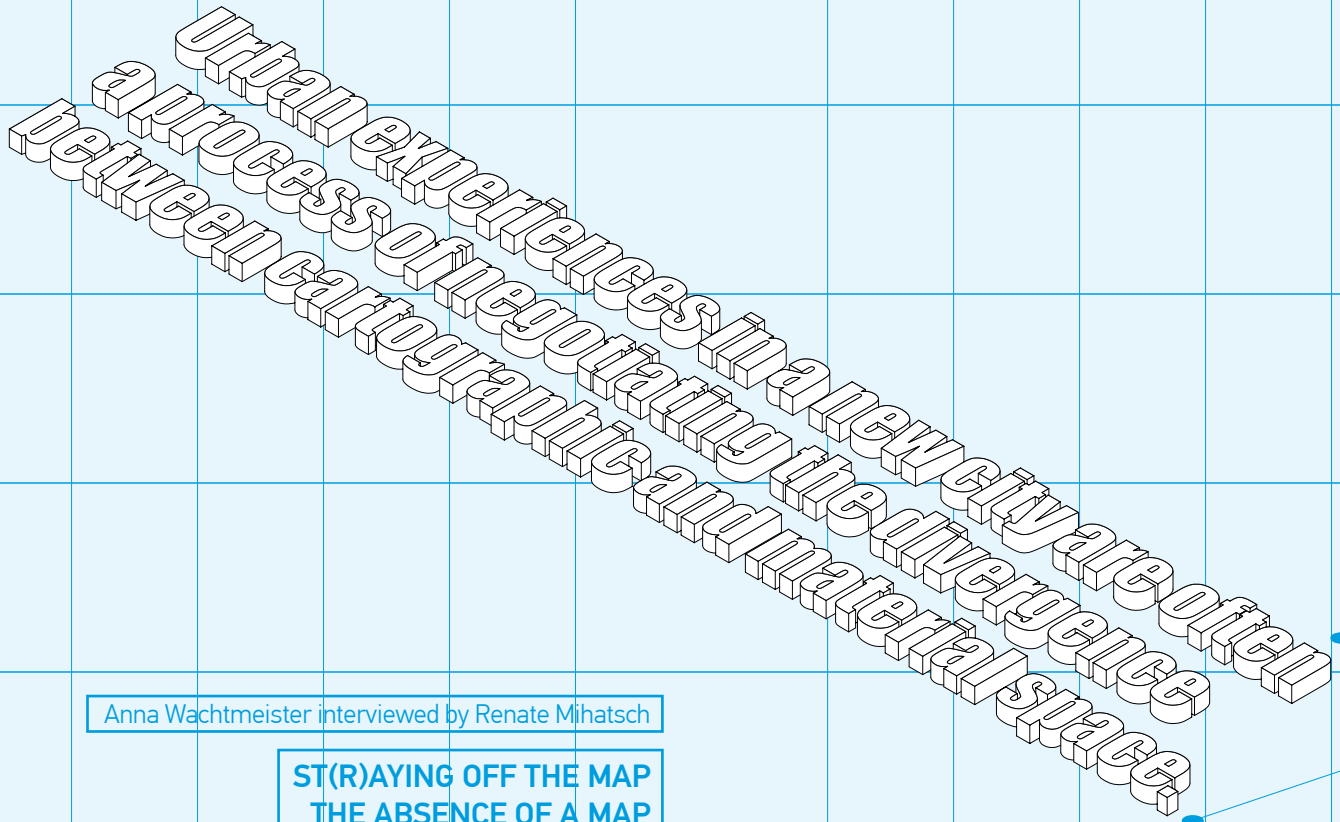
121212 12 ...

Final Composition




Bernard Risque
119
120
B 22/22
B 22/22

Cosgrove, D. 2004. 'Karto-City. Kartografie und Stadtraum' in: Möntmann N. et al. (Ed) *Mapping a City*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz



Anna Wachtmeister interviewed by Renate Mihatsch

ST(R)AYING OFF THE MAP
THE ABSENCE OF A MAP

10 07 06

Ever since childhood and now as architect/urbanist, you move around the world making, it seems, a random selection of cities your home. How would you describe your lifestyle?

I belong to a growing, privileged, international class of individuals who, after choosing migration as a life- and work style, restlessly and increasingly effortlessly arrive at, stay in and leave places. Unlike the often romanticised notion of a nomad, who without a permanent dwelling and through simple means, roams, usually following time-honoured rhythmic patterns, across under-populated expanses, we are highly specialised, have the ability to tap into resources including accessing capital, we have the capacity to enter an array of places, including private space. We can negotiate foreign, ever-shifting social structures and can rely on an advanced infrastructure to maintain our lifestyles. This includes a dependable and ever-evolving internet-based network of similar individuals providing support, information and entry-points to territories, be this to a new city, network, culture, job or project. Even though the life might be, to a certain extent, a solitary one, with this vast global network of contacts you can reach out and will be reached anywhere.

How do you choose your next destination?

I always make sure I find a job with a locally based organisation which works on local projects. It is its interaction with its urban context that attracts me to the organisation, leaving the choice of city as a default. In other words, I don't choose the city, I look for interesting opportunities. It is the consequent employment which has sustained my nomadic existence and the projects which facilitate the accessing of the city. The projects give me the precious right of entry to places as diverse as governmental buildings, slums, refugee camps, gated communities, residences of the influential classes, universities, restricted compounds, top-end hotels and resorts and, more valuably, the chance to work directly with the people who live in and activate the city. It is important for me not to engage myself too much in urban voyeurism, but to be involved in practice.

I aim, as far as this is possible to interact with the city in various ways by transcending professional boundaries. Subsequently I have, in the past ten years before I landed in Erbil, worked with the city in a range of ways: as an architectural designer in various European cities; through global urban policy at the UN-headquarters in Nairobi; through a participatory urban up-grading project in the slums of Cairo; and as an urban theorist in Caracas.

In 2008 you moved to Erbil, Capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. What made you decide to live in Erbil?

In 2008, I started working for a Swedish humanitarian NGO, working with internally displaced people as well as refugees in Erbil. Once again I didn't choose the city, in fact I didn't know much about Erbil. I first came across the NGO on the internet. I didn't know anything about the region, or even this line of work. The NGO's method of operation caught my attention, so I approached them.

Maybe more curiously, another reason I approached this NGO was because it is a Swedish organisation. For the last 30 years I have felt a

little foolish telling people that I'm Swedish as I have never lived in my "home country" Sweden, so I thought this would be an opportunity to connect with Sweden without having to give up a roving existence ...

Did you look for street maps or guide-books before going to Kurdistan? What did you find and how did *the found* relate to the actual material space?

Erbil, as with many other places I have lived, remains unmapped. Erbil is the new capital of a post-conflict region in the process of building a nation from scratch. The region was, until seven years ago, desolate because of decades of persecution, sanctions and conflict. But things are moving fast, incredibly fast, in fact. Since I arrived, nearly two years ago, a handful of tour companies have emerged catering for a small but steadily growing stream of international tourists! Global tourism will eventually mean street maps and guidebooks. For the moment however, there is no such guidebook or comprehensive tourist map of Erbil. The only such tools for a foreigner visiting the city are a small section in the *Lonely Planet* Middle East book published in 2009, which incorporates Erbil as a destination, and includes a locally produced street map – The Erbil City Guide Map – basically, a low-res *Google Earth* image from 2006 with a very random selection of streets, businesses and institutions marked on it. It is heavily outdated; the entire neighbourhood I lived in is still shown as fields!

Even an internet search won't bring you much, in English anyway. Besides, the spelling of local names in English, as for many places in this part of the world, remains flexible. I have seen the name spelled as Erbil, Irbil even Ardil ... in addition everyone here calls the city Hawler which is the Kurdish name, as opposed to Erbil which is the historical and international name. Something I didn't know before I arrived.

Apart from a straight internet search, I got in touch with the HIC (Humanitarian Information Center) of the UNAMI (The United Nations Mission for Iraq). They produce and distribute maps as part of the co-ordinated humanitarian response efforts. They are available as digital copies on CD and are also downloadable in pdf-form. Their purpose is not for navigation but for the NGO community and other humanitarian actors to better understand and communicate the local and current situation of health, water, displacement of people, etc. So, at best they gave me my initial rudimentary understanding of the city and region through the study of a map.

Furthermore, my mapping of Erbil started with taking advantage of being part of the budding network of international professionals who make any place on the world their place of operation. I reach out, people are helpful, and if I cannot find a direct contact who knows the place then someone undoubtedly will put me in contact with their friend/acquaintance/previous colleague who now operates or has operated in Erbil. This way, I had three international contacts, as well as the organisation that I joined, on which I could rely for quicker integrations, further contacts, and practical information, prior to and upon arrival.

As well as being unmapped, Erbil hasn't been "written" yet. Erbil is to the largest extent not mapped, remains unwritten and unbranded. It is virgin and untouched territory in this sense. It hasn't been interpreted, imagined and reimagined, rewritten, nor written for the visitor to the city, nor to a certain extent for Hawleris (people from Erbil) themselves. In Erbil you can't rely on already-gathered information to negotiate and navigate the city. But because you can't read/research before you visit, your mind has not been tainted by previous travelers' experiences. The beauty is that you will not just go and see the city

through someone else's gaze. An unwritten, unmapped city might be harder to access but actually it means that you have to engage further and are unable to project onto the city. It makes each discovery purer!

In many cities, maps at metro or bus stations and associated orientation systems and territorial coding, such as street names, house numbers or street numbers and house names, are inherent to navigation. Do you find these elements in Erbil?

There are very few additional orientation systems on which to rely. Maybe not surprisingly in this oil-rich place (that for generations did not have access to the goods that we take for granted) the car dominates the city. A public transport system can give a navigational backbone to a visitor of a city. But in Erbil, the bus system, the only public transport system, except for a large fleet of taxis, is sporadic, spontaneous and difficult to understand. Few people use it.

This is a place where everything is being put in place for the first time. Remember the region was isolated for generations and is now trying to catch up with the contemporary world. Some kind of postal service has only just been set up, street signs are presently being put up, and street names are being decided upon.

But the confusion around the names of places hinders a collective understanding of the city. For example, much has been renamed after the fall of Sadam's regime. The previous regime aimed to *arabise* the north and gave places and streets Arabic names. Now the Kurdish Regional Government is renaming as an attempt to break from the past and assert their identity. In addition, places are called differently by different groups of people. The Christians might have one name for a place, the Kurds another and the Arabs yet another. This way mapping and place finding will continue to be complex.

But, for a foreigner like me, these associated orientation systems are, for the most part, not useful as they are written in Arabic script. The city and I don't have a language in common. This reminds me every day that I don't fully live the city, as there are limits to my understanding since I can't casually overhear conversations, read signs, advertising, and so on. Instead, some of the written and spoken information reaches me through translations from the people I'm with. Grateful for their help, I'm aware that much can get lost in translation.

If you cannot rely on a map or on any associated orientation systems and territorial coding, are there other elements that you can navigate by?

Yes. The city, although confusing on the smaller scale with random building practices, is at the larger scale regimentally organised.

Erbil, a city of nearly 1.5 million people stretches out over a large flat plane with Erbil Citadel, the old city, at its centre. The citadel stands on a round tell towering over 30 metres above the modern city. It is the heart of the city and is a visual aid in its navigation. The city has grown around it in a circular and orderly fashion according to urbanisation practices established by Saddam's regime. Consequently, Erbil has three ring roads: 30 Meter Road, 60 Meter Road and 100 Meter Road with the Citadel as its core. The 30 Meter Road is the smallest, then the 60 Meter Road and finally the 100 Meter Road encircles the conurbation and today marks the boundary of the city. If the new master plan is adhered to, the city will continue to expand with ring roads. Furthermore, five large boulevard-type roads begin

at the Citadel, heading in all directions. The road heading towards Kirkuk, is called Kirkuk Road; the one in the direction of Makhmour, Makhmour Road, and so on. The citadel, the three ring roads, and the five boulevards give everyone the backbone to navigating the city.

Staying off the map describes one of your strategies quite well. What is your special interest in unmapped areas?

My intention is not to *stay off the map*, maybe instead I often find myself *straying off the map*! Your understanding of a place as a map means that the place has already been interpreted by someone else for you. It is important always to be aware of the tools that you use, accordingly I am aware that maps can be restrictive, as they mean I'm looking at someone else's interpretation and visualisation of the city. Saying this, I don't shy away from a map, I love looking at and studying them. City maps are means of accessing a city, navigation through new territories and the source of information. They also allow me to understand how a city wants to present itself to the visitor. Instead, since there are often no maps where I live and work, I frequently find myself drifting off the mapped world and living and operating in unmapped places.

There are many reasons why places are unmapped. In many places mapmakers can't keep up with unchecked rapidly growing cities, often in the form of informal development such as slum developments and urban growth-based on nepotism. These cities often remain unmapped for political and practical reasons. As I mentioned before, city maps often come with tourism. This is largely because the producing of maps needs to be a viable business. Also cities that have gone through upheaval not only need to be physically mapped, they also need some imagineering and branding before city maps or any other guides are produced. This is a highly political process.

This leads me to other reasons as to why there are no maps, or maybe more accurately, why maps are not used: The use of a street map is something that you and I grew up with, which was then fostered during our architectural studies and subsequent projects. Most people, however, whom I encounter, don't use maps, and many don't know how to use a map. Here in Erbil, for example, you get taken to places; people negotiate the city for each other and escort each other to places. I'm not sure if people help each other to navigate out of courtesy. Or whether, in this society, you will rarely, especially as a woman, go somewhere by yourself. Or if it is because people find it hard to explain locations, or if places are just hard to find in these ever changing chaotically-built environments. Unlike informal settlements where the inhabitants know their neighbourhoods very well – they built them after all – here the city is changing and growing so fast, Hawleris themselves only get to know the emerging Hawler as it develops. Or maybe it's a combination of all these factors. This phenomenon is probably exaggerated for me, as Kurdistanis are startlingly hospitable to all foreigners. Besides, Westerners would, until the recent past, always be escorted by bodyguards, drivers and/or fixers, so maybe it also still lingers from this?

Keeping safe is another reason why maps are not used. For example, when I just arrived in Nairobi, before I had met anyone or started work, I remember sitting in my little YMCA room trying to memorize the map in the *Lonely Planet* in preparation for exploring downtown. Downtown Nairobi is exceptionally unsafe, but this didn't curb my determination to get to know my new city, so instead I made sure not to be provocative by carrying and looking at a map which to anyone signals "unknowing tourist"!

You lived in Caracas, which was initially planned according to the strict guidelines of colonial urban planning. The first official map of Caracas dates back to 1578, about ten years after its foundation. Erbil in contrast is one of the longest continuously inhabited cities in the world, possibly 8000 years old. These two cities have totally different histories but both are hard to map: Erbil, because it is relentlessly developing, and Caracas because of its continuously expanding informal settlements. What similarities do you see between these two cities and other cities you have lived in, regarding urban restructuring?

In both cases market forces and nepotism are the overriding influences determining the shape the city takes, leaving planned urban strategies based on consensus by the wayside. This leads to unchecked and dis-integrated urbanisation, resulting in the marginalisation and segregation of the urban fabric. This generates a city of physically, socially and allegorically standalone and isolated urban elements in the form of gated communities, poorer neighbourhoods where other people "simply don't go", malls, ... and so on.

For example, similarly in Erbil and Caracas, a growing number of people ghettoise themselves by living in these gated communities and spend more and more time in the private spaces such as urban entertainment and shopping centres. In Caracas there is a real culture of fear and people find refuge this way. In Erbil people are just eager to have what they could not experience before: 24 hour electricity, and goods imported from abroad, for example. The market is quick to please these two needs and as a result cities import foreign urban models and accompanying lifestyle at a startling rate. The first international-style shopping centre opened in Erbil some months back and many more have opened since then. *New Villages* (read: gated communities) and *Cities* (read: more gated communities and shopping malls) are mushrooming everywhere. The elite, such as government officials, the NGO-crowd and Kurdish returnees from exile abroad, live in places such as the English Village, American Village, New Hawler or Naz City. Italian and German Villages are planned.

How do you start to navigate a city if there are no maps?

0! There are many tools besides maps, and as we discussed before, maps can restrict as much as they help with accessing a city.

My number one tool is to reside. I see every city as my host. Aware of how a city can either receive or defy my presence, I do all I can to get to know my host. So upon arrival, I try to dismantle, as far as this is possible, my nomad-being with the aim to reside, if just for a while. I find that only with a more sedentary attitude will a city will start to make itself known. This is why it's important for me to stay in a place longer.

My next tool is to use my foreignness to its best advantage. Aware that I will not experience the city as a local women my age would and as much as my status as foreigner hinders accessing the city, I instead take full advantage of being unaffiliated. Not being captive in memories of a place and instead having the ability to make comparisons with other cities, allows me to observe with a certain lucidity. In addition, in more conservative or segregated communities, it grants

me access to conversations and places that others, restricted by tradition, religion or class, would not easily have access to. Besides, always aware of my limited time in that particular place, my senses are always peeled.

Lastly, the approach is paramount. It is not about covering ground. I try to not move around at that western academic architect's speed, looking through a camera and shying away as soon as someone spots you. I try not to be a voyeur, but aim instead to interact. Being with a foreigner, or even being seen as a foreigner can be a reason to be nosy, to gawk, to strike up conversation, to linger in places in which you otherwise would find little reason to linger ...

GPS can guide you towards the shortest, most efficient and safest route. It guides you without your having to be an active explorer. Getting lost can also be a strategy. Often you are not using a map while exploring a city. I am sure you have often got lost as well?

I wouldn't call it lost. With the aim of getting away from purely being an observer and reader of the urban fabric, I allow myself to be taken. I aim not to make my plans, and to a certain extent my agenda, too rigid, but instead to allow for deviation. So much so that I often find myself in situations that I instinctively wouldn't be drawn to. While finding myself on new paths with new characters, letting the situation lead me onto entirely new voyages, I make sure not to ask too many questions to hamper the situation that's developing, but instead to ask the right questions. It's in this way that I get the opportunity to peel back and start to see what lies behind.

Somehow as a result in Erbil, the people you encounter are human maps whose information you access through interaction. You often gaze through an individual's eyes. So for you, Erbil has 1.5 million different maps. In a constantly changing world maybe these flexible human maps are still more contemporary and adaptive than super modern, digital cartography. It is just a matter of excess. Would you agree with that and are you afraid that paper or digital maps could destroy this diversity to interpret urban space?

It is a matter of both excess and access. What do you do with 1.5 million maps? Maps are first and foremost produced to be practical tools but before they are produced they need to jump through political hoops.

For the first time there is stability in the Iraqi Kurdish Region after millennia of turmoil. Although, Iraqi Kurdistan is de-facto independent, it has its own parliament, laws, military, border-guards and immigration policies. Maps remain politically sensitive. The borders of the Kurdistan Region Government's administered territory remain disputed.

Maps are always highly charged but are also tools to create consensus between people and to start to build a collective gaze and identity. Maps are part of nation building and can bring direction and unity to a place if done right. Maps always have a controlling influence over what is present and what is absent, over what is collectively imagined and that which becomes real for its users. I don't think there

is a danger that paper and digital maps might destroy a diversity in the interpretation of urban space. The more people create and communicate, the more people will find the courage and interest to explore and engage with their surroundings, especially for people living in increasingly segregated cities.

Why do you map and what maps are you creating?

Everyone who moves to a new place will, to a certain extent, map. You need to know where you go to buy food, where to go if you get sick, how to get around your new neighbourhood. But I take it one step further, I also map because it is my intuition. I map because I crave mapping my surroundings. I cannot explain it.

My resulting maps become, what I started to call, mappings; they are random and instinctive. The mappings are a result of my impulsive desire to document the city and, more often than not, they remain unfinished personal explorations which end up as ideas and snippets of information both in my mind and as external information too: a manifold of sketches; many photos; scribbles in my little red book that I always carry; email exchanges; photoshopped images; boxes with gathered objects that I find along the way, and so on. I create an accidental collection of mappings, which comprise a folder on one of my many hard disks and a box in my storage space clearly labelled with the city. The fragments of mappings make up my understanding of the city which I aim to internalise into who I am as a professional urban practitioner and how I work and operate in my surroundings.

My life and the city explored moves too fast to linger on a piece of information or a particular project. The urban phenomena and my curiosity relentlessly makes me gather more, document more and communicate more. As well as change my mapping method. My maps are not drawn in one day, my maps are continuously modified aware that maps are a result of a time-based activity; that is, until I move on to the next city when I pack up and the mappings solidify at this point.

With delight I share my findings with anyone who wants to know, and even the process of the mapping itself, but this is not the reason I map. I am not an artist, mapmaker or teacher, I am a practitioner. The mappings are of great value to me; as much as my projects inform my mappings, my mappings inform my projects. My projects range from participatory urban upgrading of slums to urban heritage management. My projects give me access to the city, while the created mappings enlighten my project work. One feeds the other. My mapping obsession roots an expatriate like me to a place allowing me to make informed decisions within my work. As Albert Camus wrote, 'The evil that is in the world almost always comes of ignorance, and good intentions may do as much harm as malevolence if they lack understanding.'

What happens when you leave a place? How and what do you take from the mappings once you move on?

It's funny you ask me this, because, as I ponder all the questions that you posed during our conversation, I have left the mapping phase and have entered the transition phase. I am in the process of packaging the mappings of Erbil into a archive folder on my computer, scanning my sketches and other found objects. As this chapter is closing, I have opened another folder called PaP (Port-au-Prince). My mind has been made up, after nearly two years in Erbil, I will shortly be

moving on to Haiti where it is reported 70 % of the buildings collapsed in last January's earthquake. As the city goes through the reconstruction phases of emergency, and of transitional and permanent shelters, the city will be redrawn. My mappings will try to make sense of the reconstruction process filling my newly opened folder where until now some unread internet articles linger.

Knowing that you will leave incites another state of mind. Moving on is coupled with unclenching yourself from the city's embrace, packing up, detaching yourself from routines and the unsolved and turning your thoughts towards the next destination. The to-do lists are long and it hurts to know that not all will be realised. The confusion of re-arranging belongings, thoughts and feelings for me is a time of deep emotions. I dread transitioning before it arrives, but immerse myself fully as soon as it does.

Dislodgment gives me that key chance to wrap up and organize the diasporas of observations and the many lessons-learned, but it is a period when I reflect on dislocation and location in time. The world once again ups its tempo and grows vaster. I find myself zooming to the larger scales and reassessing and repositioning my global stance.

It is during this time that my truest feelings for the place reveal themselves. You start to understand how the place got under your skin. Only people who have moved away, understand how the act of leaving can mean getting closer to a place, its people and its doings. It's a time of when you are acutely faced with the risk of leaving people, opportunities and questions behind, including the risk of never returning, mapping or realising them.

Since my departure was decided, all I've wanted to do is to make sure I conclude my Erbil chapter. I want to go through my mappings and try to draw conclusions. But most importantly I will try to spend some time bringing order to my mapping exercises, but always finding that there is something more urgent to experience, along with invites, and must-discuss situations, which often means leaving my mappings in a shambles.

Ernst, W. 'Das Archiv als Gedächtnis' in: Ebeling K. and Günzel St. (Ed.) 2009 *Archivologie. Theorien des Archivs in Philosophie, Medien und Künsten.* Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos (translation of quote Antonia Pont)

Data: Michael Langeder

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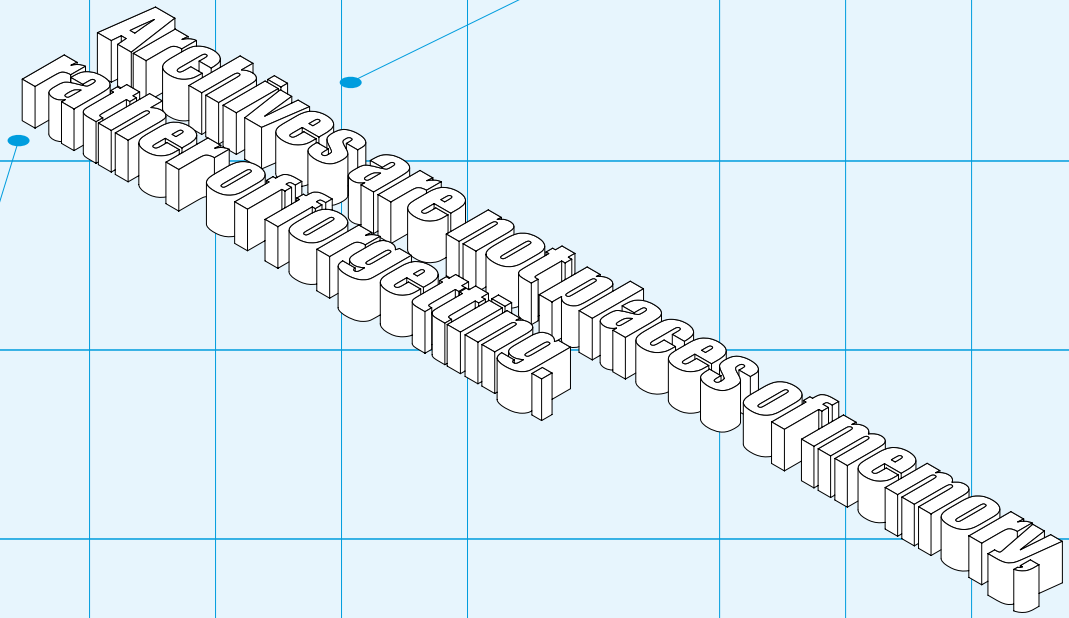

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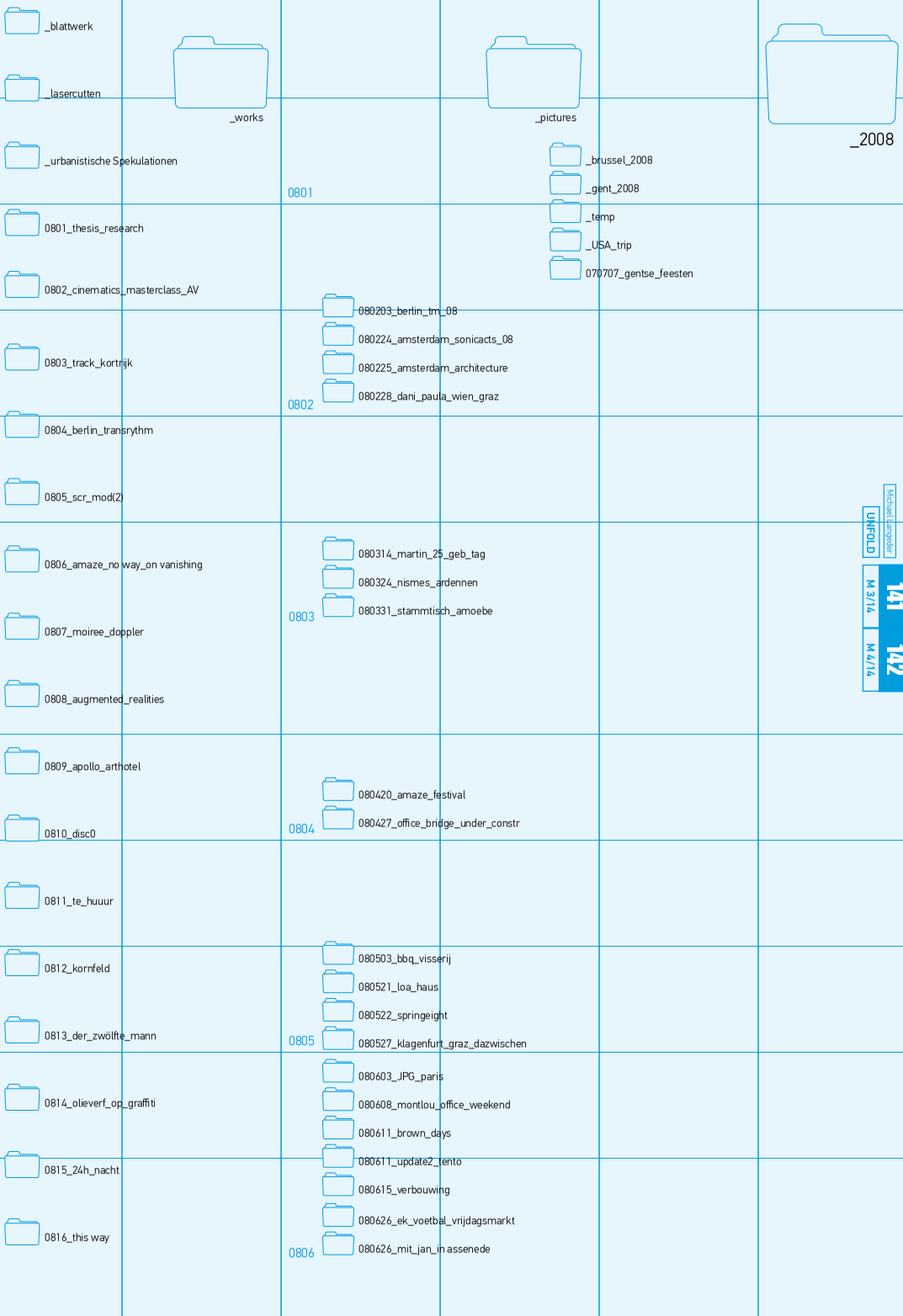
012 - TOOLBOX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M 3/14
141
M 4/14
142

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0820_dorkbot_presenation

0821_jean_paul_gaultier_PARIS

0822_nordlicht

0823_bett_tisch_stuhl_kasten

0824_krakrock visuals

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0827_room without qualities

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portfolio 2007

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100513_dirk

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1005_the shades of cyan

1006

Michael Langeder

UNFOLD

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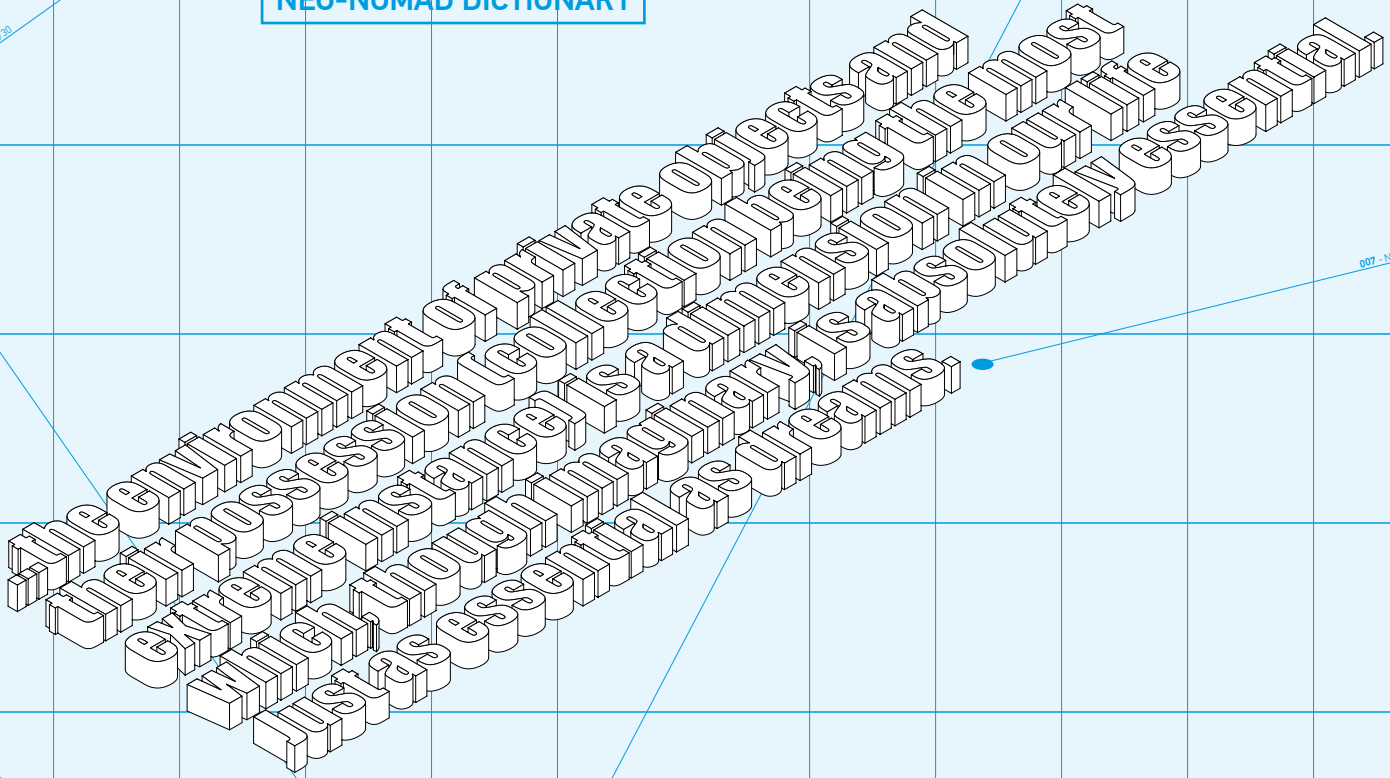
Text: Yasmine Abbas

NEO-NOMAD DICTIONARY



quote chosen by Yasmine Abbas
Baudrillard, J. 1996. *The System of Objects.* London; New York: Verso, p. 95

eth·no·mog·ra·phy from *ethnography*, and *nomos* (which is the Greek root for *pasture*) – in relation to the nomad. It is the creative gathering of data while on the move using digital neo-nomadic tools and platforms such as mobile phones, geo-tagging, video, blog or videos, email threads, etc.

de·tach·ment the ability and practice of **neo-no·mads** to separate themselves from objects, people and places: *S/he detaches from her/his sofa; the memories do not stick to the object when one is confronted with the problem of having to transport it.*

clo·ning a tactic used by **neo-no·mads** to formulate **ho·me**. It means recreating identical habits and spaces in the many places in which they have a space that they inhabit regularly: *S/he has cloned her/his library in both apartments in Paris and Boston.*

ho·me·tel dynamic space, remotely reconfigurable and personalized via internet so to recreate a sense of **ho·me** and temporarily inhabited by **neo-no·mads**.

neo-no·mad mobile individual who constructs and reclaims a sense of belonging to places through digital, mental and physical means (Twitter definition). *S/he is someone free to travel anywhere where today's infrastructure of travel exists – roads, nodes, networks, vending machines, etc.*

sam·pling a tactic used to formulate **ho·me**. In (electronic) musical terms, sampling is the appropriation – selection and recording – of sound and music bits (often part of a prior creation of another artist) for reuse and assemblage into a new musical piece. The musical analogy holds true for **neo-no·mads** as they sample cultures and the urban environments in which they roam for reuse in the creation of a comfortable, personal and movable space.

hy·per·tex·ting involves

1. navigating the world wide web,
2. in the lineage of Ascher's definition[1], changing social groups and identities in the physical and digital world,
3. utilizing a method of associations of information and concepts or **eth·no·mog·ra·phy**[2].

[1] Abbas, Y. 2006. *Neo-nomads: Designing Environments for Living in the Age of Mental, Physical and Digital Mobilities.* Doctor of Design Thesis: Harvard University Graduate School of Design

[2] Ascher, F. 2000. 'La Société Hypermoderne ou Ces évènements qui nous dépassent, feignons d'en être les organisateurs' in: *La Tour d'Aigues: L'Aube, Essai*, reprinted 2005

mo·bil·i·ties mobility is now plural; it is at once physical, mental and digital.

dig·it·al mo·bil·ity (what we will also call **hy·per·text·ing**) describes the online activities of people and their alter egos (representations of the self or avatars for example), i.e. it is the navigation of digital platforms and spaces.

phys·i·cal mo·bil·ity relates to the movement of bodies, objects and spaces from a point (A) to another (B) in the physical world. It includes the physical displacements of digital devices, portable or embodied (we then become cyborgs).

men·tal mo·bil·i·ty is the shift in position of the self within spaces (physical, digital, social) and thus the transfer of meanings of spaces and the attachment to them. Mental mobility is due to cultural crossings, which are a consequence of physical and digital displacements. Naturally, physical, digital and mental mobilities intersect and are a consequence of one another; yet each kind of mobility entails specific tactics of **Re: lo·ca·tion** or anchoring to spaces.

ho·me the organization of networks of physical, mental, and digital storage spaces. This space has a morphing quality and depends on **sam·pling**. See **meta-ar·chi·tec·ture of sto·rage**.

pro·to·cols of in·ter·ac·tions establish the identity of the persons, places and objects interacting. Neo-nomads create tools and protocols of interaction to understand the culture in which they land, and to swiftly adapt to spaces.

018 - NAVI
025 - Y5/16
095 - AA 27/30
100 - B 2/22
159 - Y7/16
096 - AA 2/30
098 - AA 29/30
012 - TOOL BOX

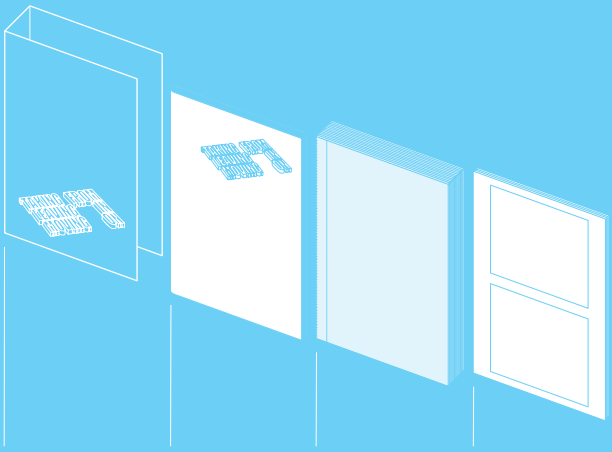
re: lo·cate **neo-no·mads**' practice of dwelling. Neo-nomads dwell temporarily in spaces and places. They adhere to places via **pro·to·cols of in·ter·ac·tion**, **sam·pling** and **clo·ning**. The degree of stickiness to new places and spaces depends on one's ability and tactics for re-creating ties, for coping and inscribing memory – that which makes a place **ho·me**.

self-sto·rage the storage of the self consisting of objects and paraphernalia embedded with temporary personal meaning. Self-storages organize into a network. See **meta-ar·chi·tec·ture of sto·rage**.

ta·xi-ci·ty urban environment made of containers (we consider vehicles, spaces, objects – such as mobile phones, and even bodies – as containers) that people appropriate for a certain amount of time, and the use of which they share with other strangers.

still condition in which physical, mental and digital **mo·bil·i·ties** align and one stays in place, remains attached to one culture, and is faithful to one community.

meta-ar·chi·tec·ture of sto·rage networked architecture of **self-sto·rage** spaces (from external drive to basement storage). It is a spatial configuration resulting from the fact that neo-nomads do not carry all their belonging with them; they store. This represents **ho·me**.



00
cover

01
booklet

02
collection of contributions

03
stickers

Renate Mihatsch presents in this publication eight contributions by artists, architects, musicians, and cultural and urban theorists who discuss discoveries in the fields of mobility, neo nomadism and urbanism. This small collection consists of photos, dialogues, graphics and essays which are linked with one other and are visualised by the editor. The graphic design turns the publication into a territory in which the reader can navigate freely, revert steps and start anew. Discovering the space of *Taking FROM Leaving IN Moving ON* also includes ripping of the pages which then can be put together to a large overall map.