

To defend a position, to pursue an ideal

This issue of *Archis* is filled with maps, diagrams and other graphic representations of one reality or another. There has been a time-honoured belief that at least two things could be read from maps: the place where something is and the direction that something could take. This was supported by the hypothesis that place and motion are two aspects of territoriality, issues of spatial determination. However, those who truly study what the different forms of cartography have to offer us today quickly realise that the validity of this hypothesis is declining. With the virtualisation of individuality, knowledge, money, and the increasingly looser reins controlling production and living, i.e. one's life story, space loses its overriding emphasis. In other words, the question of where something is or where something happens is losing ground to the question of when something happened, in what situation and under what provisional conditions. This trend, already extensively discussed in various social processes, is very difficult to translate into a cartographic image. That is why we still often see the contours of the old world order shimmering through the new facts.

While this may seem a theoretical problem, it suddenly becomes all too real when we are faced with the question of what position we intend to take and what goals we intend to pursue. In our daily dealings with the world we can act like autonomous citizens with an autonomous will and autonomous choices to make, but that will begins to feel quite uncomfortable in the increasingly fluid conditions around us. This becomes crystal clear when we focus on the intertwining of the two economic production factors used for the past 200 years as the most common reference for choosing positions and unfurling ideals: labour and capital. While Western countries are busily discussing measures to dam the flood of labour from poor countries, jobs are actually rapidly flowing towards the poor countries. While capital is being promoted as a means to stimulate and develop the economy, it seems capital can just as easily disappear as accumulate, and at the end of the day nothing is being developed. We are only just beginning to understand the consequences of this transience on the conceptual framework we used to organise the world throughout the entire Industrial Age, but it is simple to conclude that under such conditions defending a position and pursuing an ideal become especially delicate matters.

Having said that, I should add that it is even more difficult to intervene convincingly in reality as it is unfolding. Aside from simply blocking or hindering certain developments, there is little that can provide a profound motive for actions that aim to redirect existing energy in a better direction. The question is, what is 'better'? You may have missed an important parameter without realising it. Thus, reality may indeed be more postmodern than any theory or philosophy could ever have become. Reality is beyond theory. Just try to change that with your intervention.

Or, better yet, with your design! The entire design world is permeated with the understanding that designs are based on positions and goals. How long can that go on? Or perhaps the despair can be skipped that is waiting when the same world realises that not one single motive can be proclaimed, let alone imposed. If so, first we have to answer the question of how to develop a perspective from among the current cartographic metastasis. In other words, how to convert a map from a des-

cription into a tool. Or how to turn the computer which can contain and animate all these parameters into a sledgehammer, a pen, a plow or a trowel (tools of the will). In this issue of *Archis* we have started some explorations.

