IMAGINALYSIS, OR THE TECHNOLOGIES OF PLACE

How do we respond to the demand to think and fight for place in the era of global capital? Shopping malls, urban sheds, industrial parks, car culture determining urban form, a hyper-consumeristic American cultural hegemony[1] displacing local cultures: all seem to have resulted in dis-orientation, societies of the 'non-place'[2], of the absence of territorial markers. What's more, this gradual shift towards the death of the local appears to be unstoppable, a force that has descended upon us through the implacable logic of the military-industrial complex and its avatars. Does resistance to this encroaching abstract place-lessness have to be assembled through the conservative strategies of territoriality or of nationalism (certainly forces that are operative in the contemporary), or are there other forms of more constructive response available?

How does technology fit within this question? Is it that which is intrinsically to blame? Is technology fundamentally the *cause* of the contemporary experience of modern homelessness?   This appears to be a plausible contention: for instance, the recent technologies of communication - the phone, the television, the internet - are all *mediated* modes of connection. In order to make contact with another, these technologies are successful on the basis of *distance*. Communication in this instance involves a fundamental *separation* between people. Technology has therefore produced a world where people communicate to each other through staring at screens and talking into pieces of plastic. Moreover, the same story about technology could be told in terms of technologies of transportation, technologies of health (witness the critical insights offered by a feminist historical critique of 'gynaecology' over woman-controlled birthing[3]) and so on.   Finally, the technological power of weapons of mass destruction and the ecological disasters of the military-industrial complex have, in this century, brought us to the realization that we now have the means by which the largest place we share, the Earth, could itself be threatened (at least for human beings and their supportive ecologies).

In my opinion, this view is misguided. Technology is not the fundamental cause of place-lessness or separation from community or metaphysically at work through a deep-level alienation between people. Rather, the evisceration of experiential loci is a result of the abstracting force of *global capital*, appropriating technology as one of its conduits (amongst others, the emergent global media being perhaps top of the list) in order to equalize relations between market, workforce and consumption.[4] The general form of this equalization has been the

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[1] See for example George Ritzer's recent books *The McDonaldization of Society*, Pine Forge Press, 1995 and *The McDonaldization thesis: explorations and extensions*, Sage Press, 1997.

[2] See Marc Augé's *Non-places: an Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, New York, Verso, 1995.

[3] Mary Daly *Gyn/Ecology, the Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, Boston, Beacon 1985, see also Emily Martin *The Woman in the Body*, Open University Press, 1989.

[4] Or, as Antoine de Saint-Exupery said somewhere, capitalism creates 'men for chewing gum, rather than chewing gum for men'.

effacement of particularity, or, in the words of Marcuse, the production of a 'one-dimensional' society.[5] It is not in the interests of global capital for there to be local features which resist or complicate the proliferating circuits of production and consumption.[6]

In many ways, the so-called 'globalization' at work today can be seen as a development of prior processes of industrialization. As the Marxist spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre has analyzed in great detail, industrialization has lead, in this century, to ever greater separation between the elements of production. This process began with the separation (around two hundred years ago in the west) between work and domestic space, and from this ramified into further areas of specialization within these two spaces.[7] For example, the modern typology of the home as a network of more or less functionally distinct space-units gradually developed out of a more mixed and multi-functional arrangement. As a more contemporary theorist suspects, this process of zoning and cellularization is beginning to advance into a new phase, whereby the centre-periphery urban arrangement of industrialization is evolving into a pure zonality without centre, leading to 'exopolistic' urban forms – urban plans with no delimitable or recognizable centre.[8]

For brevity's sake, I shall not digress further into the details of contemporary analyses of space. Rather, I shall merely stick with the suggestion that as industrialization segues into globalization, the disorienting experience of place-lessness (in cities without centres, template homes, malls, industrial parks, commercial sheds, through the ubiquity of MTV, CNN, etc.) is the effect of the increasing power of multi-national and trans-national commercial entities over local production and commerce within local communities. Everywhere, the loss of 'aura' felt within the everyday is a product of global reproducibility.[9]

All this being said, nonetheless, contemporary technology (especially communications technology) certainly does tend to reproduce mediated relations of community across the abstractions of its interfaces. Perhaps this mediation reaches its apotheosis with the mobile phone: how many people in the west have had the experience of a room of people on the phone to someplace else? [10] It is

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[5] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Boston, Beacon, 1964.

[6] On the other hand, global capitalism has lead more recently to the simulacra of place in the form of niche marketing. Here, differentiations are made within the field of consumption in order to expand the market.

[7] Henri Lefebvre *The Production of Space*, Oxford, Blackwells, 1991. For a feminist account of this diremption, see Leonore Davidoff & Catherine Hall, *Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850*, London, Hutchinson, 1987.

[8] See Edward Soja's *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Oxford, Blackwells, 1996.

[9] See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, in *Illuminations*, London, Fontana, 1992.

[10] As Bobby R.Dixon writes, in "Toting technology: taking it to the streets", "The car phone (and the plane phone) allows instant communication with those far away as one travels, while simultaneously allowing one to avoid communication with the immediate other." in *Existence in*

important to be clear however that the meaning of 'technology' per se remains undetermined. Technology, like everything else, only has meaning in the socio-cultural and economic context into which it is inserted. In terms of the latest gadgetry (like mobile phones and their tiny integrated descendants), there will always be an element of commodity *fetishism.* Even then, the story of what technology 'means' is not completed. The meaning of technology granted through any contextualisation can never be finalized. In contemporary terms, this means that technology is not wholly determined by the forces of capital. Contrary to one of the guiding narratives of Hollywood films, we are not in the grip of a nightmarish technological determinism.[11] The meaning of technology, if not quite 'up for grabs', can certainly be challenged in the face of how it gets embedded in corporate and consumeristic logic. It is thus that one form of resistance to the generalized displacement of our times opens up: thinking the possibility for 'technologies of place' and 'technologies of the local'. This will be the line of research of this paper. In order to commence, we shall first of all have to acquire some clarity over the philosophical implications of thinking about technology. From this point, we will be able to develop how technologies of place involves a challenge to the conventional architectural agenda in favour of the local.

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In a sustained meditation on technology, Heidegger maintained that the word's essence dwells within its etymological core.[12] In ancient Greek, Heidegger claims τεκνε (*techne*) most fundamentally refers to 'disclosure' or 'unconcealment'.[13] The *techne* of an epoch is therefore that which is disclosed within its terms. Moreover, for Heidegger, *techne* refers to the disclosure of an historical world. Towards the end of this essay Heidegger surmises that each moment of disclosure or unveiling of the truth of an historical world is accompanied by a closing off and a concealment. Just as a plant is once a germinating seed, then a shoot, later a mature specimen and then finally undone to the elements, disclosing itself as temporal and ordered by manifestation and concealment, so too does technology disclose a world and its opportunities at the same time as offer itself through the movement of a withdrawing. Technology therefore does not refer first of all to the tools, instruments or machines of an era; rather, it refers to the worlds (and shadows) made available in their epoch. For Heidegger, the essence of modern technology in the West is that of an 'enframing' (Gestell) that tends to reduce nature to a stock-pile or 'standing reserve' of *natural resources.* Within this same advent, modern technology

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Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy, edited by Lewis R. Gordon, New York, Routledge, 1997.

[11] One of the recent forms of this narrative is the film "The Matrix".

[12] See *The Question Concerning Technology* in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings* edited by D.F.Krell, London, Routledge, 1993.

[13] "…what is decisive in *techne* does not at all lie in making and manipulating, nor in the using of means, but rather in the revealing.." Ibid.p319

withdraws into a sort of mystery, as its essential character of mastery and domination of the natural itself refuses to be mastered and dominated.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty makes a similar point in his essay *Eye and Mind* when he says that "Our organs are no longer instruments; on the contrary, our instruments are detachable organs".[14] Technology, here announced through 'instrumentality', is most fundamentally a function of the blood and guts of human existence, the set of prosthetics to perception, reflexivity, emotion, spirituality, work and so on. Merleau-Ponty implicitly ties technology back into techne in this passage - what is privileged is technology as a *way of showing* rather than a set of *techniques* or a *technics*. In this sense, the emphasis on ownership in his statement becomes apt - technology ought not to be viewed as a monstrous, out-of-control Frankensteinian beast (or as *viroid* in today's terms). Rather, technology is given meaning by humans, and has no meaning outside of this, like everything else that bears sense and non-sense in this world. Thus Merleau-Ponty can be seen to be in partial agreement with Heidegger. Any line of thought that attempts to impute meaning to technology outside of its commerce with the world (say through 'instrumentalism', where technology in some sense is thought to *determine* behaviour) exaggerates the role of that which in fact acquires meaning only through and within existent cultures.[15] Neither philosopher ought to be taken as thereby attempting to *domesticate* technology or dismiss its dangers; on the contrary, both have since their deaths been of use in the rise of the present day ecology movement.[16] Their point, as I understand it, is rather that nothing has meaning outside of the human world of meaning, and that technology, insofar as it affects culture, does so *within its terms*. Technology is therefore no more controlled or out of control as 'culture' is itself; it is rather an essential element in the dialogue a society has in each present about its future and its past.

There is however a significant difference between the two versions of technology just presented that will resonate throughout this essay as it resonates at large. On the one hand, for Heidegger, questions concerning technology inevitably involve recourse to the *historical* in a top-down event-mental sense: history is the gift that defines the destiny of a historical people, and modern technology is the gift that is at work defining modernity. There seems to be no room in Heidegger's story for the possibility that *people* might affect the meaning of technology through their actions, work and practice. This contrasts sharply with Merleau-Ponty's slant that the technology that surrounds us works because it offers itself in various forms as extension of our bodies. The implication of this

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[14] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*, in *The Primacy of Perception*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1964, p178.

[15] This point is clearly demonstrated in the more recent additions to technological paraphernalia of the everyday. For example, the mobile phone, as an increasingly ubiquitous gadget of our times, by and large opens up another space for the banal, rather than transforming that space.

[16] In terms of the implications of Heidegger's thought in this direction, Michael E. Zimmerman has been one of the most influential voices. See for example his essay "Heidegger, Buddhism, and deep ecology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, edited by Charles Guignon, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

version of the meaning of technology is that it is determined largely by which bodies do what with which instruments. In other words, humans, for Merleau-Ponty, *do* have a say in the meaning of technology.

The difference between these two accounts is becoming increasingly and dramatically politicized in the world at large (in the west and non-west). Is technology a genie out of the bottle that we can no longer contain - with for example the economically and politically powerful bio-tech research companies threatening to genetically modify our understanding of life itself, as well as destroy ecosystems in the process? Or, do we (non-scientist-researchers, non-agents of the trans-national corporate entity) have a say in what gets revealed? This issue goes much deeper than 'ethics committees' can go; rather than rubber-stamping or disapproving what has already been undertaken, the question being raised increasingly nowadays is 'whose technology/science, and for what?' Moreover, this concern has a more positive side, with more and more people determined to organize things differently for themselves. 'D-I-Y culture', through word-of-mouth and the internet, is growing apace, challenging the historicist conception of technology at work in Heidegger's account with a more Merleau-Pontyan-style agency. As an initial example of this, the internet has become increasingly a space where different groups can gather and organize information and ways of living oblique to the military-industrial complex.

I shall return to these antagonisms. For the moment, let us note that there *is* nonetheless a common thread that runs between the two accounts. Technology in both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty is established as not having any universal meaning or any value in-itself. This does not imply that technology as such is 'neutral'. Rather, technology, taken in the sense of 'contemporary gadgetry' folds back into the context-dependency of *techne*: things in the world are revealed through their embeddedness within the historical whole. Perhaps it is stretching the Heideggerian view to the limits, but this understanding of technology implies that its meaning is forever *contested.* For example, the aeroplane signifies differently to different people in different times and places. To a mind accustomed to western operations, the aeroplane is just another means of transport. To a mind still affected and conditioned by animism, the aeroplane touches the sphere of the gods and retains a magical power to be respected if not feared.[17] To a mind sharpened by ecological awareness, the aeroplane is a severe waste of energy. Who is to decide amongst these interpretations?

Rather than see the determination of its meaning through contextuality as a form of passive embedding, through examples such as these, I think that technology is 'taken up' differently by different individuals and groups in different places and times. Moreover, I contend that the sense of agency implied in 'taking up' (as

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[17] I am thinking here of the variations of the Yoruba proverb "The (white) man who makes the pencil is also the one who makes the rubber". The aeroplane, resembling a mechanical bird, invokes Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron and the hunter-god. The Oyimbo or white man is thus to be feared because of this spiritual invocation through aeronautic technology.

opposed to 'passive embedding') is best expressed in terms of the *imagination.* What is common to all the 'interpretations' of the aeroplane just given is that in each case, the aeroplane is *imagined* differently. In many cases, the imagination involved is not individualistic, it is more a matter of a *collective* imagination. What is significant in using this term is that it implies that nothing is fixed in the world, and that according to the powers of our imagination, the possibility of change may be opened up. As I shall argue shortly, when the imagination is used as a tool of engaged critique, it can become a very powerful means of challenging the contemporary status quo, or rather, the contemporary techne. The criticism that arises with such a suggestion is that it is the politics of the dream, a head-burying in the time of hard geo-political realities. First of all then, in order to avoid any suggestion that resorting to the imagination as a mode of critique risks collapsing back into a kind of nineteenth century idealism, it is necessary to explore what I take to be involved in the term.

As I see it, the imagination as a possibility of contemporary critique functions through the *image*. Our interpretations of the world and its objects (i.e. of 'techne') are assembled through representation; we form an 'image' of the world in order to assess its meaning. It is thus that image-ination is involved in how the world is represented. There is no 'literal' or 'realistic' representation of the Real (of reality as a transcendent phenomenon), there are merely different interpretations of it. These interpretations are most often deeply embedded within cultural frameworks. Therefore, the imagination is most commonly *collective* and *historical* rather than individual and somehow generated *ex nihilo* from the present. It is the imagination that therefore determines how an object or a life-world gets represented. The imagination is the conduit or schema by means of which what shows up in the world acquires meaning and significance.[18] Again, this hermeneutic model of representation does not imply that meaning is conferred passively on objects through culturally sedimented determinations, but neither does it imply that everything that shows in the world as a phenomenon is up for grabs and available to an imaginative free-play. What is required is a model for the imagination that avoids the opposing dangers of an overemphasis on either passivity or activity. In this way, the political antagonisms involved in the issue of contemporary technology can at least be clarified, if not resolved.

I suggest that the way through this difficult question of agency is to see the imagination as a *practice.* Rather than being an ethereal activity that takes place somewhere in the head, the imagination involves *a dialogue* with what is given in the world. Using the imagination is therefore a way of engaging with the world, and, as was implied above, challenging the ways in which the world gets represented or *imaged*. In order to consolidate this notion of the imagination as a form of engaged practice, we must disabuse ourselves once and for all of any

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[18] Thus we skirt close to 'social constructionism' - the view that every phenomenon is a cultural artefact. To social constructionists, the category of the 'natural' is a prime target for analysis as an effect of cultural formations.

lingering doubts about the status of images. We must dwell therefore on the following massively significant passage from the same Merleau-Ponty essay,

> The word "image" is in bad repute because we have thoughtlessly believed that a design was a tracing, a copy, a second thing, and that the mental image was such a design, belonging among our private bric-a-brac. But if in fact it is nothing of the kind, then neither the design nor the painting belongs to the in-itself any more than the image does. They are the inside of the outside and the outside of the inside …[19]

In this quote, Merleau-Ponty demonstrates how deeply affected by platonism we still are. In Plato's *Republic*, the work of art is famously derogated as the 'copy of a copy'. Thus, the best form of a bed is the idea or *eidos* of bed. The bed fabricated by the craftsman is a secondary form of reality, being at one remove from perfection. It is the painting or representation of the built bed that therefore, according to Plato, occupies the lowest or most imperfect form of reality. It is this ancient philosophical depreciation that still hovers behind the notion of 'imagining' something: a secondary (or tertiary) world is apparently evoked which is less perfect than the real world, and still less perfect than the rigors of a formalistic approach. Thus the imagination is understood as an ethereal activity for the head, not related in any convincing way to the hard materiality and factuality of the world itself. Merleau-Ponty confronts this conception head-on in the above passage. He argues that the image is not separate or removed from the 'outside' of reality, and that on the contrary this outside is conditioned in part by the way in which it is first of all designed or imagined. Correlatively, he is claiming that the inside (say of the mental image) itself is not separate or prior to external influence, and that therefore the imagination is in part a product of external factors.[20]

Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, the imagination is not *the bridge* between the external world and the internal world. Rather, the external world that we confront is *itself already* a product of the imagination - a sort of collective and historical sedimentation that has gradually merged onto the Real. This interlacing or syzygy between interiority and exteriority calls for a form of critique that I call 'imaginalysis.' Instead of an orthodox conception of the image (with its ontological clefts between representation and reality), *imaginalysis* involves first of all the recognition that the world as it stands is already in part an effect and product of the imagination. Secondly, and in response to this first breakthrough, imaginalysis seeks out idealized variations of what is given in the spatio-temporal situation of the present. In this way, images we form of the world function both as an *idealization* and as a *critique* of the world as it reveals itself here and now. As Merleau-Ponty says a few sentences later, "[f]or the imaginary is much nearer to, and much farther away from, the actual." Henceforth, an approach to the

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[19] *The Primacy of Perception*, p164
[20] In this way, Merleau-Ponty avoids the trap of leaving a space for the Romantic conception of the inspired 'genius' to flood back in.

contemporary scene through the imagination first of all reveals how the world *has been* imagined. In this way, we are brought closer to 'reality' than any naïve or brute empiricism insisting on 'facts' would allow. Imaginalysis encourages the view that what had seemed like a depressingly hard historical necessity was in fact a bad idea run wild. Rather than falling into the trap of existential despair over the absurd contingency of reality, imaginalysis is responsive to the ways in which what has been built into this time can be transformed through activities of the imagination. This first moment of imaginalysis is in itself a powerful form of unfixing reality and exposing the forces of normativity, showing the societal ramifications of what developed out of an image of the world.[21] Beyond this, imaginalysis always aim to evolve into a second stage, whereby the world as it has been given is suspended and placed at a distance, in order for a productive-transformative-imaginative encounter with the Real. It is through this second moment of imaginative critique therefore that the world can become 'far away from the actual.' Although he was talking about art and paintings, I think Merleau-Ponty's comments in *Eye and Mind* can be generalized:

> The eye sees the world, sees what inadequacies keep the world
> from being a painting, sees what keeps a painting from being
> itself, sees - on the palette - the colors awaited by the painting,
> and sees, once it is done, the painting that answers to all these
> inadequacies just as it sees the paintings of others as other
> answers to other inadequacies. [Prp, 165]

Imaginalysis therefore has a double function: it allows for us to detonate the apparent fixities of the world, and at the same time paves the way for an invigorated exploration of the possibilities for different imaginative and therefore *transformative* encounters with the Real. Imaginalysis is a tool for reclaiming what was seen as sedimented and striated as a resource for transfiguration.[22] In this way the imagination can be seen as a form of radical *practice.* It is a way of criticizing what is apparently 'given' in contemporary culture by elaborating new ways of seeing, and new forms of 'vision'. Far from being a 'copy of a copy' and an epi-phenomenon of reality, the imagination, whether as a seed within a mind responding to worldly constraint or as the background to an anonymous communal response, begins to show the force and power of the image in relation

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[21] The power at work in an analysis that emphasises *both* contingency and the imagination is present in Foucault's work, according to David Couzens Hoy, in his recent article "Critical Resistance: Foucault and Bourdieu" (in *Perspectives on Embodiment*, edited by Gail Weiss and Honi Haber, New York, Routledge, 1999.). According to Hoy's reading of Foucault, it is through an archeology or genealogy of past bodily practices that a 'critical resistance' to the contingencies of the present is opened up.

[22] In this light, what I am claiming for 'imaginalysis' has much in common with re-conceiving the world as *rhizomorphic* in Deleuze & Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, London, The Athlone Press,1988. What has tended to drop out from the deleuzian frame is an appreciation of the ongoing power of the forces of what they call 'striation' in favor of what is in my opinion a delusive affirmation of the fluid.

to techne. The imagination becomes the fuel for a political alchemy.[23] As Elaine Scarry writes,

> While imagining may entail a revolution of the entire order of things, the eclipse of the given by a *total reinvention of the world*, an artifact (a relocated piece of coal, a sentence, a cup, a piece of lace) is *a fragment of world alteration*. Imagining a city, the human being "makes" a house; imagining a political utopia, he or she instead helps to build a country; imagining the elimination of suffering from the world, the person instead nurses a friend back to health.[24]

In terms of my concerns here, what I want to demonstrate is how the imagination, as a practice, allows for creative and critical encounters with *place* and *location* in the era of globalization and the geo-political colonialization of neo-liberal ideology across the planet. It is through the production of new images of our world (in the sense just outlined) that we can challenge the loss of place threatened and imposed by recent capitalism, seeking transformable potential in what is given. It is crucial that this project is not couched in terms of a nostalgic territoriality or the search for cultural purity. These traps can be avoided by following two guidelines. Firstly, place is sought through an imaginative critique of contemporary technology. As I shall continue to argue, it is at the level of practice/praxis that the 'meaning' of modern technologies, which at first appear to be the complicit devices of trans-national over-coding, can be re-imagined. With Merleau-Ponty's understanding of technology-as-prosthetic in mind, we can become more aware that it is the body's imaginative choice that determines what a thing does and is used for. Technology then becomes less an imposition and more the product of a creative desire. This thought can immediately have practical creative effects, for example in terms of materials and forms. A hay-stack can become building material, waste wiring and packaging tape can become basketry, human waste becomes high quality organic compost, the roof more than just a necessary barrier to allow for shelter[25] (the precursors here being Le Corbusier's work from *Maison Citrohan* to *Unité d'Habitation*[26]). Secondly, place is sought through an exploration of the potentiality of the *city* (and not solely through rural idyll).[27] Our cities lend themselves perfectly to the kind of imaginalysis portrayed above.

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[23] It is through on-going intellectual exchange with Dan McQuillan that the alchemical has become a more significant aspect of my thought.

[24] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain, the Making and Unmaking of the World*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1985.

[25] Recent work at the Architectural Association by MA and PhD students in the Environment and Energy program looked at the multi-functional possibilities of the roof, for storing grey water, taking advantage of solar potential and so on.

[26] See *Modern Architecture - a critical history* by Kenneth Frampton, London, Thames & Hudson, 1985.

[27] Such as that found in Heidegger, especially in his explanation of his refusal to take up a Professorship at the University of Berlin, "Warum bleiben wir in der Provinz?" (Why Do I Stay in the Provinces") published in *Der Alemanne*, March 7, 1934. In this eulogy to the Black Forest, Heidegger writes at one point, "The world of the city runs the risk of falling into a destructive error".

Cities, perhaps above all other artifacts, reveal themselves most obviously as the product of past imaginations, both collective and individual. In turn, in contemporary times, our cities (whether in North America, Europe or elsewhere) are in dire need of imaginative alternatives to the past forms of totalistic imagining that have sedimented themselves within or as part of the urban fabric.

To begin thinking about 'critically resisting practices of place' in light of the contemporary techno-economic hegemony of the military-industrial complex, I want to suggest first of all the ways in which placial praxis is already operative. First of all, it is evident that we do 'practice place' in our everyday orientation within the metropolis. Far from accepting wholeheartedly and pessimistically a 'globalization = ontologically homelessness' story, attendance to demotic actuality reveals that human animals tend to set up forms of home and place wherever they find themselves.[28] Memories get inscribed into the walls of malls, as they did in the plazas and agoras of a once-was. Moreover, ethnographic discourse reveals to westerners the deep significance of placial practices in the rituals of non-western cultures. The Aboriginal spiritual practice of 'walkabout', whereby ancestral 'dreamtime' routes are followed and 'sung'[29] - as well as the associated aboriginal graphics, different manifestations across cultures of the 'round-dance' and so on all suggest that 'placiation' is a trans-cultural phenomenon closely interwoven with other core spiritual practices.[30] Moreover, it is only a particular western mind-set that imagines that globalization *actually* succeeds in imposing an equalized and homogenized value system upon the world. This view is flatly contradicted by anthropological evidence which shows that global dissemination of ideas and distribution of products are as likely to be appropriated into local value-systems as much as they are likely to import different conceptions of living through a neo-colonialistic commerce.[31]

But can these cross-cultural patternings and localized appropriations be of assistance to resistance in the current situation? Is it not the case that global over-coding is now more powerful and virulent than ever, and that embodied practices and subversions of the local themselves can now only take place within the terms of a more generalized and deeply-sedimented equalization? That is, the 'critical resistance' offered by everyday practice and orientation within cities and even the most 'bush' of places is circumscribed by the 'enframing' of

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[28] See the three essays of Part III of Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, especially "Walking in the City", Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984.

[29] See Bruce Chatwin's imaginative encounter with aboriginal culture in his novel, *The Songlines*, London, Picador, 1985.

[30] The ground-breaking work in the area of a phenomenological anthropology is David Michael Levin's *The Body's Recollection of Being,* London, Routledge, 1985.

[31] I am thinking here of the wonderfully refreshing text *Invisible Territories: the Art of African Micropolitics* by David Hecht and Maliqalim Simone, SemioTexte, 1996. Through a rich panoply of examples, they demonstrate the ambiguity in the direction of cultural appropriation. Perhaps their best example is that early form of global culture: Christianity. By showing what happens to christian practice once it is taken up in different African settings, they complicate the issue of 'cultural imperialism' by pointing to the patronizing levels of *passivity* on the part of the host culture the term implies.

globalization, such that resistance is made increasingly fragile and ephemeral and subject to co-option. After all, everybody wants to wear Nike nowadays, don't they?

If this were the extent to which the one-dimensional equalizations of capitalism are resisted, opportunities for hope would indeed be minimal. However, in recent times, alongside the burgeoning power of the trans-national corporate world, there has been consolidation and growth in more *explicit* practices of critical resistance. The streets of the contemporary metropolis (as well as the earth of the rural field) are vibrating to the sound of D-I-Y culture assembling itself. For example, in the U.K., groups such as *Reclaim the Streets* (which calls itself a 'disorganization'), the *J18* umbrella coalition, *The Land is Ours*, *Earth-First*, the *Campaign Against the Arms Trade*, *Jubilee 2000* (etc. etc.), on top of more established outfits such as *Friends of the Earth* and *Greenpeace*, are all developing forms of critical resistance to the ramified overcodings of global capital. As well as offering highly informed and persuasive critiques of the industrial-military complex's latest machinations, these groups are replete with bold forms of imaginalysis. For instance*, Reclaim the Streets* gathers an increasingly wide cross-section of groups and individuals disenchanted with car-culture and a world barren of joyful and participatory public spaces. Run simply by those who have made the choice to be involved, RTS has no 'top-down' ideological form or organizational structure. At its core, RTS appeals to those who imagine different forms of social space apart from roads at the end of buildings. The common desire is for an urbanism that affirms the sensuous experience of the pedestrian body. In this sense, there are re-awakenings at work in such movements as RTS to sixties French and Dutch Situationism and the so-called 'unitary urbanism'. For example, there are echoes of Raoul Vaneigem through the old slogan "Beneath the streets, a beach", which have been adapted literally on some RTS events, with sand brought in to street parties or *Temporary Autonomous Zones*[32] on the freeway. Moreover, through multiplying distribution sources on the internet, new alliances and forms of internationalism are spreading rapidly, whereby common causes have been sought between different local forms of resistance. For instance, the recent *Stop the City* event in June 1999 in London organized by the J18 umbrella group rapidly became internationalized beyond expectation in the weeks leading up to the event (even though the globalized media sought to underplay these connections), to the extent that actions took place in over 40 countries on the same day, involving tens of thousands of people. As part of a wider series of movements, J18 played its part in the subsequent significant cancelling of third-world debt at the G7 summit later in the month. In the same way, just as the World Trade Organization (the new GATT) has quietly become one of the most powerful institutions on the earth, capable of imposing trade sanctions on any country that steps out of line of the deregulated exchange of goods, multiple forms of resistance from across the planet are coalescing into umbrella groups of

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[32] See Hakim Bey's *Temporary Autonomous Zones*, Semiotexte, 1988.

strategic resistance in favor of local empowerment.[33] These alliances often base their joint-campaigns around important dates in the trans-national calendar (as with the J18=June 18 movement). In each case, the internationalism of any common agenda tends to be organized from the grass roots up, so that what is maintained throughout is a sense of *local* concerns which are mirrored to a greater or lesser extent in distant locations. Again, these emerging forms of grass roots resistance to globalization are often accompanied by a more positive and creative aspect. Diverse forms of autonomy and local production/consumption circuits are being developed across the planet that resist capitalistic homogenization of lifestyle through consumerism by D-I-Y means. Examples of these autonomy movements include housing and workers' co-operatives, local-economy trading schemes, 'farmer's markets', self-build houses and communities (including 'eco-villages'), small-scale banking schemes.

In this way, place is being fought for through different forms of imagination and different 'technologies of place'. No level of administration and control has been left uncontested in this creative struggle, be it juridical, ontological, economic, political, psychological or otherwise. It is through these developing forms of resistance across the world that we begin to see how complex and contested the question of 'place' is; much more than being an aesthetic matter of whether locales retain their singular character across economic change, place becomes the site of a whole series of conflicts of ownership and occupation. Place is not merely the form of a container,[34] it is rather one of the principal grounds of agonism between subjects and their world.[35] Place is therefore pre-eminently the arena for the political, etymologically underscored by the word's origin in the Greek city-state or *polis.* As I have tried to show, in a sense the major geo-political problems of the world get concretized in the form of a struggle for place, in the time of new and ever more virulent forms of trans-national over-codings of political and economic power. Globalization is perhaps first of all an *abstraction*, of ownership, control of the means of production and local topologies. It is through the manifold forms of local resistance I have alluded to that this abstraction is being contested at each step of the way. There is therefore one thing of which we can be sure: that the ends of global capitalism and global consumerism are not going to be advanced without a fight, with the bodies, spirits and minds of ever greater numbers of resisting agents joining forces across the globe, largely by way of the possibilities of the 'new media'.

In a publication read mainly by those interested specifically in architecture, the question that may have been developing through the text may well have been: *what about architecture?* Otherwise put, how does/could architecture intervene in this geo-political scenario? In a sense, the above argumentation points, if

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[33] One form of international resistance to institutions such as the WTO is the *International Caravan,* an international collective of farmers campaigning against the tyranny of 'world trade' through a tour of the political centres of Europe.

[34] As in Aristotle's famous analysis in his *Physics* Book IV.

[35] See the third chapter of my PhD thesis, *Phenomenology and Difference, the Body, Architecture and Race* - "The Architecture of the Subject".

anything, to the *limitations* of the architectural to interfere in the conflicts between technology and place. The implicit contention of the text thus far is that place is determined much more by occupation and the imagination than by anything merely *built*. Of course, it is time to admit that this cannot be the whole story between 'technology' and place. For one, architecture has been to a greater or lesser extent *complicit* in the cellular/zoning model of form and function (on the urban and the building scale) mentioned in relation to Henri Lefebvre's work above. For instance, although innovations in the typology of the home have occurred this century (through Le Corbusier's *free plan* and more lately, through *diagonalized* forms of function[36]), a general shift away from the typology of functional juxtaposition (with functional programs placed contiguously to each other) has not occurred, at least in Northern Europe and North America. In the same vein, architects have simply not been loud enough in their condemnation of urban zoning and the gradual erosion of multi-functional urban patternings. In the terms of Lefebvre's marxist perspective, none of this weakness is accidental:

> As for the eye of the architect, it is no more innocent than the lot he is given to build on or the blank sheet of paper on which he makes his first sketch. His 'subjective' space is freighted with all-too-objective meanings. It is a visual space, a space reduced to blueprints, to mere images - to that 'world of the image' which is the enemy of the imagination.[37]

For Lefebvre, it is this visualist and objectivized space disguising itself as neutral that allows for and engenders architectural *complicity* with the generalized set of divisions at work in modern society. Thus the division of labor is reproduced (and facilitated) in the field of design:

> Set aside or downplayed from the outset are all questions relating to what is too close or too distant, relating to the surroundings or 'environment', and relating to the relationship between public and private. On the other hand, subdivisions (lots) and specializations (functional localizations) are quite admissible to this practically defined sphere. Much more than this, in fact: though the sphere in question seems passive with respect to operations of this kind, its very passive acceptance of them ensures their operational impact. The division of labor, the division of needs and the division of objects (things), all localized, all pushed to the point of maximum separation of functions, people and things, are perfectly at home in this spatial field..[38]

The implications of Lefebvre's argument are clear: architectural radicality in the twentieth century has been more or less totally circumscribed by an uncritical

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[36] See Ben Van Berkel and Caroline Bos' *Moebius House* project in *Blueprint*, June 1999, No.162.
[37] *The Production of Space*, p361.
[38] *Ibid*., p362.

capitulation to the prevailing modes of production.[39] It is this ultimate limitation upon the remit of the architectural that has promoted the digression of radicalism within architectural discourse further into the visualist sphere.[40]

Without wanting to dismiss these criticisms, I want to suggest in finishing four interrelated issues within architectural discourse which, if attended to with commitment and respect, would in my view counteract the tendencies towards complicity in architecture with the ends of industrialization and now globalization. As I see it, these four points are all implied within the argumentation of this paper thus far, involving as they do questions of the imagination, technology and place:

Firstly, questions of the role of occupancy and the imagination in lived space lead to questions about the role of the architect. What kind of an 'expert' is the architect? Should the architect remain a sort of cultural visionary, able to oversee the future of a previously unanticipated form of living? By what means can such a role be legitimated in contemporary terms, given the relatively recent history of the *Siedlung* in its downward spiral from the initial exemplary manifestations in the exhibitions of the 1920s?[41] What role does 'professionalism' play in architectural practice? By what means can the architect become more embedded within the horizons of desire and imagination of the community?

Given the significance of D-I-Y Culture emphasized above, these questions themselves can be radicalized: who has the *right* to call themselves an 'architect'? Is it someone who has undergone the requisite institutional rites of passage legitimated by the state? Are people dedicated to 'self-build' and self-organization to be refused the privileged nomination of 'architects'? *Should* they refuse this name anyway, given the elitist professionalism/division of labor this appellation implies? Are there measures available in architectural discourse that would diffuse the polarization of the professional architect/unprofessional self-builder, such that the capacities and skills of both forms of life could nourish each other?[42]

If bridges are built and walls pulled down, I see no reason why a de-mystified architecture could not become available as a discourse and imaginary resource

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[39] See Iain Borden's article *Revolution* in *Blueprint*, July/August 1999, No.163.

[40] In the lecture I delivered to the AA in May 1999, *xyz*, I explored this fetishism of the visual as it transposes itself into the realm of digital technologies. Together with the architect Richard Scott (of *Surface Architects,* London), I propose an 'extra-formal' parametric model for counteracting the over-emphasis placed on the visual formant of architecture.

[41] I am thinking of the Deutsche Werkbund Weissenhofsiedlung Exhibition, opened in 1927 in Stuttgart. Designed by Mies van der Rohe as a continuous urban form, the project involved work by Walter Gropius, Hans Scharoun, Le Corbusier and others.

[42] It is here that a critique of the function of new computational possibilities within architectural discourse needs to take place. Is so-called 'data-field processing' becoming just another shield between the expert and the non-expert?

for non-architects.[43] Although there will always be residual barriers and 'restrictive practices' at work in any of the 'professions', I see no reason why internal contradictions within the discourse of architecture cannot be exploited for the sake of popularization and participation.[44] In this way, architecture would become more local, more embedded within popular opinion and imagination. In short, through a critique of the distance the *institution* of architecture imposes on its users through professionalism and elitist strategies, combined with an ear cocked to the energies of the everyday and D-I-Y culture, the status of architecture could be transformed and become part of what it is to 'build' a community and radical forms of life.

Secondly, architectural practice can never be too critically imaginative in relation to the use of materials. As Iain Borden notes, architectural radicality in terms of material technology has often taken the form of a fetish at odds with lived space:

> … one should also consider what these [material] technologies might do, not just in terms of their technical performance, but also in terms of their 'political' performance. What can they offer in the context of the restless search for social change? What is their integration within capitalism, and what is their potential for integration into everyday life?…how can we avoid the latent religiosity that pervades so much discussion about all manner of technology, and which presumes that, once organized according to the demands and capabilities of technology, we will be able to conquer everything?[45]

As I noted above, imaginalysis in relation to architectural materiality need not veer in the direction of the latest by-product of the military-industrial complex, be it aeronautics or whatever. This is where a different form of radicality strikes contemporary hegemonies in architectural discourse at the core of their fetishism: questioning the holy alliance between new technologies and visionary gestures in architecture. What if, as Borden suggests, the *political* performance of material technology was taken as seriously as technical performance? Would this not of itself suggest at least one possible detour: that professional architects learn to listen to the results of experimental design and material use outside of their discourse? In this way, straw bales, wattle-and-daub, rammed-earth, passive solar-gain and permacultural practice and so on may become integrated into a more seriously politically motivated architectural practice. Old techniques and materials can therefore receive the critical attention and resources of state-authorized architects, not as part of a nostalgic backlash, but as a means by which future communities can be built in a less exploitative relation to the environment and its occupants.

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[43] In the U.K., there are forms of popularizing architectural discourse emerging in the quality broadsheets, for instance in the insightful criticisms of Jonathan Glancey in *The Guardian.*

[44] It is here that the writing of Jonathan Hill is becoming increasingly suggestive. See for instance his book, *The Illegal Architect*, London, Black Dog, 1998.

[45] Op.cit.p38

Thirdly, and this applies perhaps in particular to local issues in the U.K., there needs to be a re-imagination of the location of community. The suburban dream now threatens vast tracts of 'green-belt' land as the developers rub their hands at the governments statistics for the number of new houses that need to be built. What needs to be questioned here is the assumption that more and more people will want to live alone in residential zones adjacent to the city (part of the reason why the projected demand for new housing appears to be so high). As Richard Rogers has argued,[46] such assumptions fail to heed the allures many people find in dense, mixed-use and mixed-tenure forms of living. Far from being merely the effect of developers and property speculators, this is the reason behind gentrification in London in places such as Brixton, Hackney and Ladbroke Grove and more recently, east London. The attraction of such places simply cannot be defined and captured in financial terms: people are drawn towards the 'cosmopolitan' vibrancy of a mixed community.[47] In this respect, much more work, both practical and imaginative, needs to be done in re-thinking the potential of the 'brownfield' site.

Finally, and most generally of all, architectural discourse needs to begin encountering the complexities of *place* as I have outlined it. It is clear from my argument that place cannot be prescribed in advance of occupancy and the imaginative upheavals enacted by those embedded within it. Architects need to develop new models and metaphors for relating to the existential facticity of place, rather than simply those that ultimately involve *imposition*, either visually, economically or culturally. Architectural discourse needs to become more *dialogic*, such that the factors that complexify place are attended to as part of the design process, not as compromises that are encountered afterwards. For example, more than simply demanding that architects attend to the essential significance of function, what needs to be explored and experimented with is the nature of function itself.[48] On both the micro and the macro scale, what has been explicit in the imaginalysis of this paper is that zoning and cellularization tends to equalize place into space: an abstract homogeneity. This statement ought to be developed in a positive direction, for architects, sociologists, philosophers, spatial theorists and ordinary humans alike: how can multi-functionality be thought in contemporary terms? How can multi-functional spaces be designed? Successful responses to these questions, through imaginative dialogues with what is given, may well lead to a re-invigoration of place itself. Through an encouragement towards urban density and complex layers of interaction, the

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[46] Particularly in his Reith lectures on BBC Radio 4 and in his work for the government-funded project for urban renewal - the *Urban Task Force.*

[47] Of course, the appropriative dangers of gentrification are massive. Again, much work needs to be done in how mixed communities can be maintained as such, without property speculation forcing the poor out. What is required in part is imagination in the minds of planners and legislators, and encouragement for housing co-ops and shared-living schemes.

[48] As Andrew Benjamin writes in relation to 'the incomplete': "In general terms the incomplete becomes a way of holding on to the presence of function, while at the same time holding open the precise nature and thus the realization of that function." In *Reiser and Umemoto: recent projects*, Academy Editions, London, 1998, p15.

anaesthetized body would then become re-sensitized to the joys of non-zonal living. Rather than a totalizing approach, the role of architecture would in this case be one of *manipulation* and subtle forms of stimulation towards interaction, at the same time as allowing for occupancy itself to determine on a daily basis how public and private space is to be negotiated.[49]

To cite Lefebvre one last time - 'these are no more than suggestions, or pointers.'[50] In this paper, I have tried to show not that Heidegger's view of technology is simply wrong, for there is a sense in which the notion that modern technology *imposes* its abstract mediations upon us and robs us of our creative capacity and potential through fetishism and objectivization is undoubtedly correct. Rather, I have, beginning with the embodied potential of technology through Merleau-Ponty's account, sought to demonstrate the power of the individual and collective *imagination* to re-situate and re-define technology and 'what appears' through different forms of practice. In this way, the powerful, but not inevitable forces of global capital can be resisted in favor of place.

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[49] Architects must imagine other devices for public-private negotiations - other forms of the Mediterranean shutter.

[50] *The Production of Space*, p 363.