

Architect, Virtual World Native

and other Technicities in Current, Architectural Use of Virtual Worlds

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The implementation of 3D-modelling into architectural design profoundly changed the relationships between its primary actors (architects, clients, engineers, contractors, etc.). Since the software and hardware for 3D-modelling is still undergoing significant developments, no stabilisation of those relationships is in sight. In order to carry out their work, actors rely on temporary configurations of the socio-technical networks they are part of.

Actor-Network Theory

Technological change is a product of interaction between a large number of heterogeneous actors (Callon, 1991); human actors, technical elements, discourses, etc.

Technicity

Motivated by its firm anti-essentialist stance, ANT traditionally avoids zooming in on individuals. However, issues of taste and skill are crucial in the ongoing configuration of ICTs in architectural work. To address these issues the subjectivity of individuals must be drawn into the analysis. Jon Dovey and Helen W. Kennedy offer the term technicity

to encapsulate, in conceptual terms, the connections between an identity based on certain types of attitudes, practices, preferences and so on and the importance of technology as a critical aspect of the construction of that identity. To be subjects within the privileged twenty-first-century first world is to be increasingly caught up in a network of technically and mechanically mediated relationships with others who share, to varying degrees, the same attitudes/tastes, pleasures and preferences (Dovey and Kennedy, 2006: 17).

Interviews

Our work is empirically based on eight interviews (and counting). Six of the interviewees had trained as architects, two of them as industrial designers. All are involved in the use of 3D modelling in architectural work, understood broadly to include large-scale spatial design (e.g., memorials and exhibitions).

The interviews brought to the fore issues of the interviewees' IT skills and tastes. Our interviewees frequently bundled IT tastes and skills together and assigned them to model subjectivities. To stress the crucial role played by ICTs, the concept of technicity was chosen to denote those subjectivities.

Technicities impact technological change.

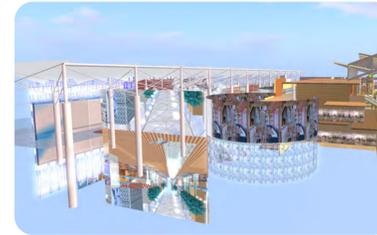
Digital morphogenesis

Some of the technicities we have outlined to the right are interwoven with discourses such as architectural theory. Here, the “digital morphogenesis” paradigm aims to change architecture’s focus away from its finalised, built form and towards underlying processes. The “bottom-up” technicity entailed in digital morphogenesis (the architect’s fascination with digital technology and willingness to delegate some of his or her power over the design process to unpredictable simulations) resonates with the ideal of architectural design as a collaborative process open to end-users.

References

Callon, Michel (1991), 'Techno-Economic Networks and Irreversibility', in Law, John (ed.), *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination* (Sociological Review, London: Routledge).
 Dovey, Jon and Helen W. Kennedy (2006), *Game Cultures: Computer Games as New Media*, (Maidenhead: Open University Press).
 Leach, Neal (2009), 'Digital Morphogenesis', *Architectural Design*, 79 (1), 32-37.

Interviewees



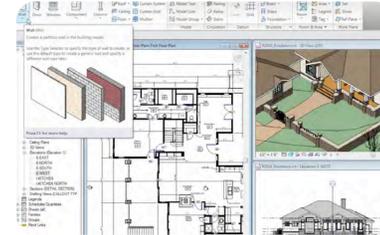
David Denton (architect, AIA) used “Second Life” as a design and presentation tool for a mall to be built in Cairo



Jacob Østergaard (architect, MAA) pioneers RealSite, “platform for the future for city planning, construction and maintenance”



Bo Boje Larsen (architect, MAA’s firm, 3XN, employs advanced 3D-modelling in architectural design



Bengt Kålderén (architect) consults on the implementation of Building Information Modelling (BIM)



Bob Ketner (industrial designer) and the Tech Virtual promotes collaborative exhibition design using “Second Life”



D. Liam Wright (industrial designer, thick “Second Life” portfolio,) uses OpenSim to design and present proposals for a memorial project



Tsu-Yu Chen (MA in architecture) developed H-town in an OpenSim for Hometta (who connects private clients with architects)



Bern Bötzel (architect) teamed up with, Anshe Chung Studios to promote Bethanienturm, a development project in Berlin, in “Second Life”

Chinese

- Client: Foreign taste (experience over imagination)
- Worker: Skills for routine jobs

Client

- Lack of spatial imagination

Engineer

- Lack of spatial imagination
- Inherently technical craft
- Function over aesthetics

Architect

- Superior spatial imagination
- Inherently cultural craft
- Free, abstract thought

Gamer

- Fun over function

Virtual world native

- Affinity for ICTs
- Affinity for avatars

Social media virtuoso

- Share, link, co-create

Digital morphogenesis

- Digital simulation (of processes occurring in nature)
- “Form-finding over form-making
- Bottom-up over top-down processes
- Formation over form” [Leach 2009: 34]