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CONTENTS

EDITORS' NOTES.....	5
MADELEINE GRANVIK, DANIEL KOCH AND MAGNUS RÖNN	
ARCHITECTURE AS THRIVING – IN SEARCH OF “THE QUALITY WITHOUT A NAME”.....	9
RAINE MÄNTYSALO, KAJ NYMAN AND JOHANNA LILIUS	
TERRITORIAL BRANDING: THE EXAMPLE OF JEAN NOUVEL’S “LOUISIANA MANIFESTO”.....	35
ISABEL MARCOS AND ANA FERREIRA	
THE SHAPING FACTORS FORMING CONTEMPORARY AND FUTURE OFFICE DESIGNS.....	53
CHRISTINA BODIN DANIELSSON	
ARCHITECTURE AND DEVIANCE IN SCHOOLS – IMPLICATIONS OF A META-SYNTHESIS OF HOTSPOTS IN SWEDISH SCHOOLS.....	81
CHARLOTTA THODELIUS	
FORUM	
DEBATE: STUDY PROTOCOL. THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND HOME HEALTHCARE SERVICES. <i>THE DEVELOPMENT AND CONTENT OF A STUDY PROTOCOL TO EXPLORE ENABLERS AND BARRIERS IN THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR THE DELIVERY OF HOME HEALTHCARE SERVICES</i>	105
CECILIA PETTERSSON, INGA MALMQVIST, STEN GROMARK AND HELLE WIJK	
DISSERTATION REVIEW: ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS IN LATVIA.....	123
REVIEWER: MAGNUS RÖNN	
BOOK REVIEW: THE COMPETITION GRID: EXPERIMENTING WITH AND WITHIN ARCHITECTURE COMPETITIONS.....	131
REVIEWER: LEIF D. HOUCK	

Photo on the front cover: Magnus Rönn.

The photo show artistic design from an introduction course for students in architecture, called A1, at Chalmers University of Technology.

TERRITORIAL BRANDING: THE EXAMPLE OF JEAN NOUVEL'S "LOUISIANA MANIFESTO"

ISABEL MARCOS AND ANA FERREIRA

ABSTRACT

This article intends to be the first of a series, in an attempt to show the scope of a wider question, which is "what is Territorial Branding?" and why this issue is important for us architects.

One of the oldest levers of "Territorial Branding" is the "Brand Architects", more commonly called "Star Architects". It would seem that the identity of their brand, represented by a proper noun (their own), like Jean Nouvel, Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaas, among others, is confused with the "values they are building up". In general, we see that the Brand-Architect¹ organizes his/her "brand" around one manifesto, or several manifesti, which most times sound like a revolution and underline the values that characterize it, like the leading element of the strategy for each project. We will explore how Jean Nouvel achieves this, through his "Louisiana Manifesto".

We will analyse the link between praxis and theory as fundamental components of any architectural approach, from the example of the Nouvel Manifesto applied to the project "Le Grand Pari(s)" (The Greater Paris). This example will lead us to the study of rhetoric as a strategy of Nouvel's brand.

1 Most of these architects (and we are referring to the ones we observed during this analysis) dress in black. Perhaps seeking elegance, simplicity, sobriety, rigor, mystery or, in addition, the opening of their branding to "all the colors" of the world.

Keywords:
territorial branding, brand
architects, star architects,
identity, manifesto, multidisciplinary,
theories, models, praxis,
urbanizing, architecting.

Introduction

Throughout this article we will comment on the components of Territorial Branding represented in image 1, through the example of Nouvel's Manifesto applied to the project "Le Grand Pari(s)" (The Greater Paris).

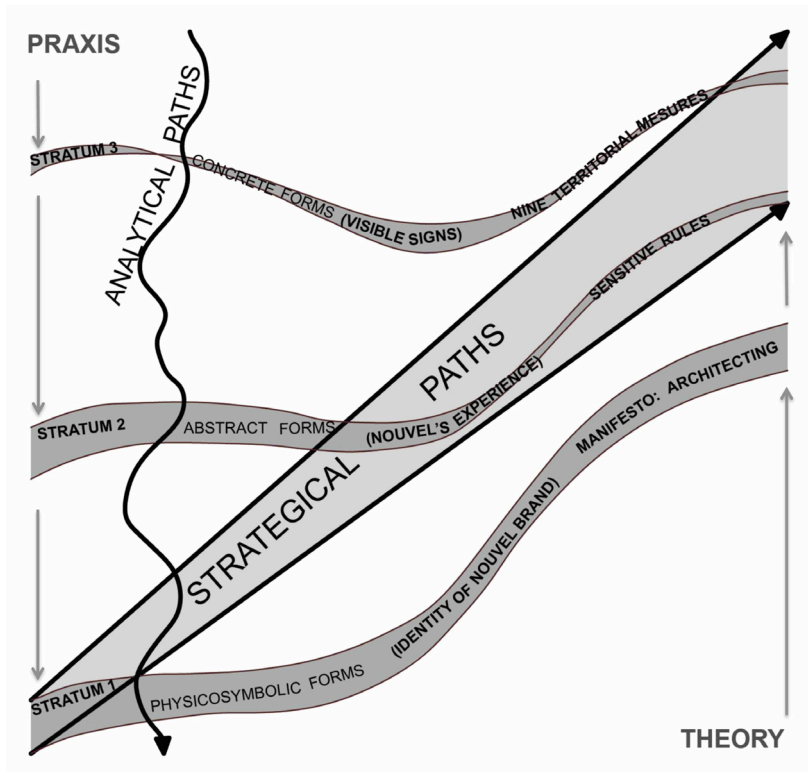


Image 1
Territorial Branding is made of a set of stratified layers of meaning

"Star Architects" or "Brand Architects" are the general concepts that define every architect that owns (see Image 1):

STRATUM 1, a genetic code associated with its own name, its **brand identity**, has one or several manifests where the key values are precisely defined. In the example we are going to work on, Nouvel proposes the concept of "Architecting" as a new vision of the territory and a summary of its manifest.

STRATUM 2, an **architectural experience specific to Jean Nouvel**, Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaas, to name a few, that every user can experience and feel as distinct. Nouvel proposes another relation with the planet by establishing complex links: the sensitive rules.

STRATUM 3, a set of **architectural forms that differentiate him** from all other architects. The Jean Nouvel team proposes 9 measures of territorial transformation applied to "Le Grand Pari(s)" project.

The articulation of these three strata of the architectural conception are established through two types of pathways: the analytical (praxis) and the strategic (theory) (see Image 1). These three strata and the two pathways become the fundamental components of any architectural approach:

1. Analytical path – “praxis”: What is the relation of man to his territory today?
1. Strategic path – “theory”: What is our research position, and why is this position important to the process of building an architect’s brand, in this case the one of Nouvel?

To answer these questions, we have chosen to reflect as an architect and as a semiotician. We shall present this link between the praxis of understanding space, in the following manner:

Firstly, by the praxis of the architect Jean Nouvel (analytical path), who affirms a new *relation of man to his territory today*. Here is how he describes this link:

The time has come to end with a way of doing, of seeing and of thinking, which has cut up and has unbalanced territories and lives. (...) In the face of the urban crisis, of the environmental crisis, of today’s economic crisis, it is time to invent new relations, new links, a new mobility, and consequently new types, which hybridize durable techniques, renewable energies and new morphologies in the midst of nature, introduced in all scales (Drevon, 2009, p. 147).

Secondly, by a new research position (theoretical) (strategic path), which we advocate: *can we not seek to acquire knowledge in another way?* The present state of our planet raises the question of man’s relation to territory², a central question of geography, but a geography which thinks simultaneously about climates, topographical relief, distribution of natural resources, the distribution of people and their activities, etc. We can also say that this can depend on the physical geography or it can depend on the human geography or even on image interpretation techniques, but we intend to show that the question of the relation man/territory is a question of “morphological signification” (Marcos, 2008; 1996).

We propose this approach as one of the possible spaces of communication between these two positions. It seems important to clarify the fruitful links between the architect (multi-scalar) and the semiotician, by the presentation of our theoretical position (multidisciplinary). These two positions allow us to clarify throughout this article: “*What is Territorial Branding?*”

- 2 We use the concept of the “territory”, in the sense of Alberto Magnaghi: “The territory is not a thing, but a gathering of relationships”, it is a way of redesigning relations between human establishments and the environment, against the stream, by choosing and putting into effect the components of a territorial project, as in a building construction of an architectural work” (2014, p. 6–9).

In this introduction, and before we enter into the example of Nouvel, we emphasize that *Territorial Branding* has been essentially developed by people from economics, communication or marketing like Meyronin (2015) or Batat (2016), just to name a few recent examples.

Paradoxically, *Territorial Branding* is a result of an architectural approach and process, through the movement established by the *Star Architects* developing new forms of territorial and societal modification. One of the exemplary projects of this movement is undoubtedly the *Guggenheim Museum* by Frank Gehry, that transfigured the identity, the experience and the forms of the city of Bilbao (example used by Isabel Marcos in another article around the same question (“What is *Territorial Branding*?”)).

The thesis label Marcos wish to defend is that *Territorial Branding* was born from architecture with the movement initiated by the *Star Architects*, which gives us the direction that our discipline should be able to develop into. Let no other disciplines co-opt our foundations, since *Territorial Branding* touches on the very definition of the architectural conception process in its broad sense. For example, Nouvel’s Le Grand Paris (The Greater Paris) in the design process is a territorial conception process since it covers all the scales in which a “Star Architect” can intervene: design, architecture, urban planning and geography. The perspective of *Territorial Branding* to be developed in architecture will be in the perspective of research, and this article intends to be the first of a series of fundamental reflections on the definition of the assumptions of this new domain within architecture.

1. To build a strategic “theoretical” path

Our strategic research position came to life after the meeting between experts – like Álvaro Siza, Gilles Ritschot, Per Aage Brandt, René Thom and others, and disciplines such as Architecture, Geography, Catastrophe theory, Semiotics, among others, which allowed us to focus our research on multidisciplinary issues. But the trigger point of this question of the link between praxis and models for understanding the territory is produced by encountering the thought of Michel Serres:

The essential is thus not to distinguish the ‘real’ from the ‘represented’, the historical from the mythical, the fact from the legend, not to reduce the one to the other or the other to the one, simple exercises, the essential is to see the generation of differentiated spaces. The essential is to see that there is not only one space whether real or represented – a particular conception, but any number of spaces, imbricated ones on the others, inextricably. This is difficult to imagine, at present: the multiplicity of spaces (Serres, 1983, p. 185).

Serres proposes perspectives of a new thread of scalar relations: the space formed by “the multiplicity of spaces”, by the many differentiated spaces linked by threads of relationships. He also reminds us of the difficulties confronting us with this way of thinking.

It is in a complex, multi-scalar space, fully impregnated with memories, with reverberations of a multitude of historic experiences that we, as architects, are called up to *mettre la main à la pâte*, or “get their hands in the dough”. Michel Serres insists upon the fact that the unique space and the unique time exist only in the realm of the absolute.

We must ask the question: In which type of “dough” are we putting our hands? What are the characteristics of the natural and cultural spaces of our history and our time, in which we position ourselves? This multi-scalar design allows us to understand space as a set of links between scales finely intertwined with one another, inextricably.

In order to answer these questions, we propose that we imagine the basis for our historical reality as a landscape where various ‘historical events’ and different time-spaces are intermingled.

But, how do we differentiate between them, in order to understand this complex landscape? To start, we have to imagine the “figure” of the theoretician who builds models and / or theories, simply observing this landscape from a distance, one made of a multiplicity of space-times. This “figure” scrutinizes the intertwined threads of relations and their respective rules of passage. Then, a new question must be asked: What is the possible space of communication between two positions, the creative reflexion, and the theoretical reflexion: one of whom gets the hands on the dough (the creator) and the other of whom remains at a distance (the theoretician)?

These two positions will help us in the approach to our initial question “What is *Territorial Branding*?”

As we can see in Image 1, the praxis position generates an analytical pathway, whereas the theoretical position generates a strategic pathway. The two pathways go through a series of levels of meaning, articulating the territorial forms with the forces underlying territoriality.

2. To build an analytical path: “Jean Nouvel praxis”

What do you have to say about the state of planet Earth, and what do you propose?

The answer to this question is for Jean Nouvel “A strategy at the high level of the historical and ecological challenge of this beginning of the century” (Nouvel, Duthilleul, & Cantal-Dupart, 2009, p. 632).

According to the rules of a certain tradition, the architect feels the need, before such a question, to create a manifesto. This manifesto assumes the form of “a greater” project, which defines the very being of the architect. In other words, the manifesto would be the synthesis of Jean Nouvel’s knowledge: where he defines his identity, his values, and his vision. It is perhaps the position of his profession that forces him to “dream” the forms as if he were already in the future, where his architectural projects exist.

Throughout parts 3, 4, and 5 of this article (Example: The greater Paris of Jean Nouvel), we will analyse under the semiotic perspective of architecture how Nouvel, through his Louisiana Manifesto:

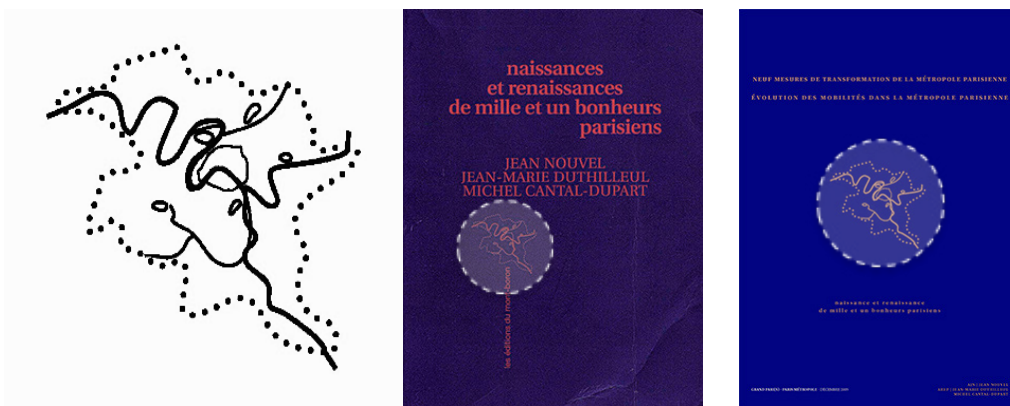
- **Exposes** that architecture despises the context that annuls the places, trivialises them, and violent them, ... around a “figure” that embodies these values – Urbanizing;
- **Proposes** another relation with the planet, by establishing complex links: the sensitive rules (between the local and the global);
- **Demands** the updating of knowledge around a “figure” that embodies the values proposed by Nouvel – Architecting. (Nouvel, 2008; Nouvel, Duthilleul, & Cantal-Dupart, 2009).

3. STRATUM 3 The visible signs that differentiate Jean Nouvel

The Greater Pari(s), a new strategic language for the Paris of 2050?

Following a request by the President of the Republic, the Municipality of Paris has proposed to multidisciplinary teams to reflect and, if possible, formulate proposals and solutions to change the development of the city and turn it into one of the greatest international *metropolises*.

As a result, ten projects came to light, in the forms of an exhibition and a book, with the tittle “Le Grand Paris (The Greater Paris)”, and its proposals were to be submitted to a democratic decision.



We have chosen to analyse the rhetoric of the image of one of these projects/proposals: that of Jean Nouvel’s team, entitled “Birth and rebirth of a thousand and one Parisian joys” (*Naissances et renaissances de mille et un bonheurs parisiens* – <http://grand-paris.jeannouvel.fr/>). On the one hand, the image of the Jean Nouvel project is composed by a strategy of images as arguments that aim to grab the receiver’s attention and adhesion (the inhabitant, the politician, the planner ...). On the other hand, the project seems to arise as an architect’s language system. Here is how they summarize it:

This book is not a utopia, but a political answer to a political question. It describes a strategy of ambitious, social transformation, realistic, clear, to be applied to the essentials of the territory and to be of interest to each commune of Paris^m (Paris Metropolis, Paris loves – m=aime=love – to the image of Paris la Défense, Paris la Courneuve, Paris Gennevilliers, etc.). A strategy, at the highest level, for the historical and ecological challenge of this beginning of the century (Nouvel, Duthilleul, & Cantal-Dupart, 2009, p. 632) (see Image 2).

Image 2

On the cover of the synthesis book of The Greater Pari (s) project we can distinguish its brand, which in this example is a sketch of the intervention zone (Ile-de-France).

SOURCE: NAISSANCES ET RENAISSANCES DE MILLE ET UN BONHEURS PARISIENS, PROJET DE L’ÉQUIPE JEAN NOUVEL, JEAN-MARIE DUTHILLEUL ET MICHEL CANTAL-DUPART POUR LE GRAND PARIS, 2009.

Let us start with a first segmentation (see Table 1):

Table 1
The rhetoric of the image of Nouvel's project "The Greater Paris".

A. Source – *Confrontation:*

A political question posed by the President of the Republic;

B. Control – *Mediation:*

Throughout the book, Nouvel will resort to argumentative control and Mediation: Sensitive Rules, Sustainable Development, Nine measures of transformation, and Tributes, and Anticipation traces;

C. Target – *Target:*

Solving the problem: An answer given by Nouvel: the Louisiana Manifesto applied to Paris^m.

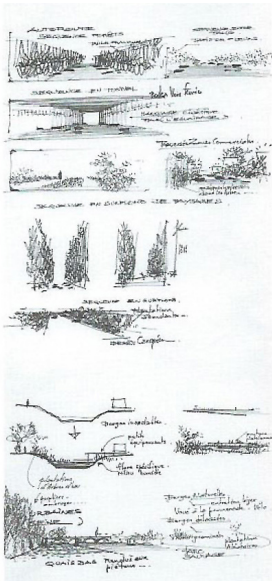
4. STRATUM 2 The aesthetic experience of Jean Nouvel Brand

The rhetoric of the image of Nouvel's project "The Greater Paris" arises as an art of discourse to persuade the receptor (the inhabitant, the politician, the urbanist, ...) that there must be an urgent transformation towards a sustainable development: Nouvel and Duthilleul (authors) underline that the political question posed:

(...) is all the more political than the beginning of this century is marked by a menace due largely to the mismanagement of our urban hypertrophies and our industrial territories. A menace to our health, and to the future of our planet. International agreements are signed inciting to a change of direction. Our children, quite rightly, won't forgive us for not honouring them (Nouvel, Duthilleul, & Cantal-Dupart, 2009, p. 37).

Confronted with the urgency and with several types of crises, the architect creates the sensitive rules (Image 3), "it is time for inventing new relationships, new connections, new mobilities, and consequently new types, crossed with the durable techniques, renewable energies, and the new morphologies, in the midst of nature introduced at all levels" (Nouvel, Duthilleul, & Cantal-Dupart, 2009, p. 37).

les règles sensibles



mutation d'un immeuble d'Habitation



In quite an architectural tradition, Jean Nouvel delivers his Louisiana Manifesto, this time applied to the territory of Paris^m, where he proposes to all Parisians a new link with nature. The argumentative challenge is put by Nouvel and Duthilleul in their presentation on the Sensitive Rules:

[...] In the name of the pleasure of living on this earth, it is necessary to fight against urbanism of zones, of networks, of chopped up territories, against this automatic decay that annuls the identity of towns on all continents, under all climates, that feeds on clone offices, on clone housing, on clone businesses, thirsty of pre-thoughts, pre-seen to avoid thinking and seeing... [...] There must be established the sensitive rules, poetic, and guidelines that speak of colours, of essences, of characters, of anomalies to be created, of specifics related to rain, to wind, to the sea, to the mountains. Rules that will speak of temporal and spatial continuum, which will guide a mutation, a modification of inherited chaos and that will take interest in all the fractal levels of our towns (Nouvel, Duthilleul, & Cantal-Dupart, 2009, p. 74).

The “rhetoric dimension of Nouvel’s discourse” starts with the first segment (A), which is the Source of the Confrontation, and the issue as a trigger – a political question issued by the President of the Republic: how to guide the development and the future of Paris; and it ends with the third segment (C), which is the Target and a Solution to the question asked – an answer given by Nouvel: *the Louisiana Manifesto applied to Paris^m*. His argument consists of another architectural praxis, which comes out of the opposition between his sensitive rules and the zoning urbanism (insensitive and institutionalized). Throughout the work of reorganization of this opposition, an argumentative control and mediation will result (between segment A and C).

Image 3

The Louisiana manifesto: The sensible rules (the green infiltrates the city). To the left some of the measures at the territory scale, to the right the application of the sensible rules of Nouvel to a street.

SOURCE: *NAISSANCES ET RENAISSANCES DE MILLE ET UN BONHEURS PARISIENS, PROJET DE L'ÉQUIPE JEAN NOUVEL, JEAN-MARIE DUTHILLEUL ET MICHEL CANTAL-DUPART POUR LE GRAND PARIS, 2009: 81, 278 AND 279.*

The sensitive rules introduce a new logic of seeing, thinking territories and lives, and will be explained progressively in this article. The sensitive rules are like a “(...) common vocabulary to put an end to mutual ignorance between beings and things, so that a shared identity is drawn up, attractive, joyful, to extend the Parisian jewel and its geography. In order to achieve this goal, our proposal contains nine measures of transformation, which are likely to structure and radically change the Parisian region” (Drevon, 2009, p. 147).

The categories at stake in the rhetoric dimension of “Nouvel’s Manifesto” emerge from the discourse on what is Architecting:

Architecting the big dimensions, it is not to invent ex nihilo. Architecting is to transform, to organize the mutations of what is already there. Architecting is to favour the sedimentation of the places that have a tendency to invent themselves, it is to reveal, to orient,

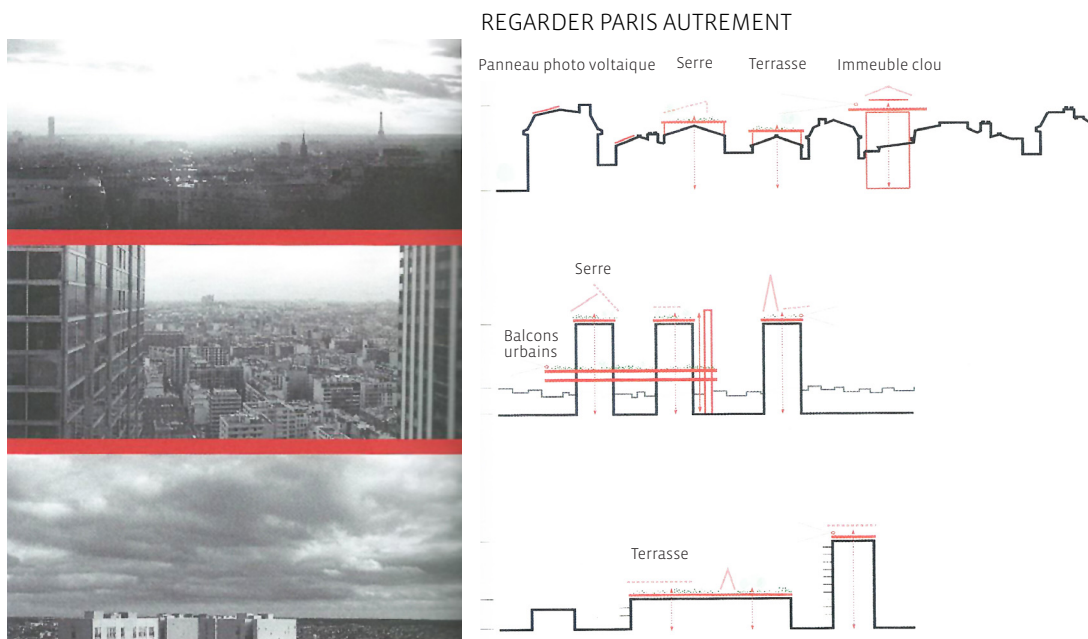
- *It is to prolong the lived history and the traces of previous lives,*
- *It is to be attentive to the breathing of a living place, to its pulsations*
- *It is to interpret its rhythms to invent.*

Architecture must be considered as a modification of a physical, atomic, biological continuum... (Nouvel, Duthilleul, & Cantal-Dupart, 2009, p. 75).

Image 4

It is not about refusing urbanism, but of promoting a way of thinking, one that Nouvel calls architecting. In the figure, we can see the city of Paris and the transformation of the roofs into green zones, fundamentally modifying the Parisian skyline.

SOURCE: NAISSANCES ET RENAISSANCES DE MILLE ET UN BONHEURS PARISIENS, PROJET DE L'ÉQUIPE JEAN NOUVEL, JEAN-MARIE DUTHILLEUL ET MICHEL CANTAL-DUPART POUR LE GRAND PARIS, 2009: 92–93.



5. STRATUM 1 The identity of the Nouvel brand: Architecting

The set of measures established to create a Paris^m invite us to move from a “sensitive rules” **source** conception, and forcefully **confronts** us with “insensitive” urbanism. Nouvel’s *Manifesto* takes us from the urbanism of zones to the **architecting** of social and territorial forms. Each of the 9 measures enables a **displacement** at the level of the contents of this project. It is no longer urbanism but a **strategy of social transformation** to be applied throughout the territory to be architected (see Image 4).

The enunciator in our analysis is Nouvel, who embodies the actant who carries the argument, the *displacement* to another conception of the social and territorial space (see Table 2). The project entitled “births and rebirths of a thousand and one Parisian joys” arises as a system of values specified by the sensitive rules.

Table 2
Displacement to another conception of the social and territorial space.

Urbanizing	Architecting (Parism)
Town	Man
Economy	Ecology
Efficiency in trade	Joy in trading
Chopped up territories	Poetry of the territory
Clones of buildings	Requalification of existing buildings
...	...

The rhetoric dimension of Nouvel’s discourse produces a displacement between the hierarchical levels – it is clear that economics is fundamental, but we should position ourselves differently, if ecology is a central issue; of course the city is fundamental, but if we don’t think, above all, of the place of man in his space, the city loses its original meaning, etc.

As we can see from the table above, the category of displacement confronts complimentary magnitudes. The key to read these displacements is the existence of a “figure” that embodies the values associated with a zoning urbanism and another “figure” that embodies the values proposed by Nouvel – Architecting Parism (see Table 3):

Table 3

DISTANCE separates the subject from its environment while IMMERSION creates intimate links between the subject and his environment.

DISTANCE (from the environment – Urbanizing)	IMMERSION (into the environment – Architecting)
<u>Practical Values</u> associated with the urbanization of zones, networks, chopped territories, clone factory	<u>Dreamlike values</u> associated with the architecting, to structure the conditions of possibility of the <i>Birth and rebirth of a thousand and one Parisian joys</i>
Separates the subject from his environment	Creates intimate links with the environment

1. If we consider “The Greater Pari(s)” of Nouvel as another “discourse on the space of urbanity”, we can gradually see two opposing “figures” emerging from this discourse: **Distance** (from the environment – Urbanizing) and **Immersion** (into the environment – Architecting). These figures of rhetoric produce and transform the values they carry, in the sense that we understand this concept in semiotics as **differences that support transformations**. For example, **Distance** will produce **practical values** associated with **zoning urbanism**, networks, chopped territories, which create clones to infinity; while **Immersion** will produce **dreamlike values** associated with the **Architecting**, to structure the conditions of possibility of birth and rebirth of a thousand and one Parisian joys. The **Distance** separates the subject from its environment while **Immersion** creates intimate links between the subject and his environment.
2. The syntactic generation of “figures” of **Distance** and **Immersion** operates on a small number of categories or paradigms, the inventory of which becomes clear throughout the work, and of which all of the *Louisiana Manifesto* constitutes what we could agree to call the “rhetoric dimension of Nouvel’s discourse”;
3. These categories could be generalized and considered as the categories of an architectural praxis.

Conclusion

Throughout this article we try, on the one hand, to use Nouvel's own description of his project, through his own citations, to show the reader that, in this case, Nouvel tried to "play simultaneously" the analytical (praxis) and strategic (theoretical) role. On the other hand, we try to observe the components of the *territorial branding*, represented in image 1, with the help of a specific example – the one of Jean Nouvel's brand.

Jean Nouvel made a set of built forms known to the world of architecture – of visible and identifiable signs. And of course, there are other *Star Architects* who have other brand identities, materialized through other sets of built forms. Nouvel's brand, as we have shown throughout the parts 3, 4, and 5 of this article, is defined by a set of values (his manifesto, which reveals his **brand identity**), an imaginary notion that we can associate with a type of **aesthetic experience** and **visible signs**, which are very specific to the architectural and urban forms.

How is the meaning of this brand organized, then? At the core values level, we have the Immersion that creates intimate links with the environment (which is rigidly regulated and codified as identity of the Nouvel brand through his manifesto), and we have the Distance that separates the individual from its environment as the narrative of what his brand is not. These values become arguments, and are, in other words, transformed into socio-cultural forms.

The aesthetic experience as a result of the Architecting (Dream-like values, associated with the Architecting, to structure the conditions of possibility of the "Birth and rebirth of a thousand and one Parisian joys") induces behaviours and expectations in the inhabitants/users, which are taken into account from the start and channelled into the project both as a condition and as a strategy. The aesthetic experience of the territories created by Nouvel also reminds the inhabitant/user of a problem – the experience in urbanized spaces (practical values associated with the urbanization of zones, networks, chopped territories, clone factory), providing them with a solution through the architecting approach.

Finally, at the level of the concrete forms, the euphoric narrative of the architecting is dressed with a rigorous selection of visible signs, which shape Nouvel's architecture: the nine territorial measures (1-Boundaries, 2-Tracks, 3-Networks, 4-Crossbreeding, 5-Districts, 6-High points, 7-Valleys, 8-Paris Center, 9-Arts – <http://grand-paris.jeannouvel.fr/>); Nature invades and infiltrates the city, as principle of requalification of existing buildings (looking at Paris in a different way, archetypes revisited by nature and techniques); Francilian towers (echo, scales, complexities, depths); etc.

Image 1 presents a scheme with the pathways oriented by praxis (analytical) and by theory (strategic) of Jean Nouvel's brand. The components of territorial branding allow us to organize the different forms of brand signification that lead us to its global discourse – *manifesto*.

Through the identification of three levels of signification (identity of the brand, experience of the brand, and visible signs of the brand), each one of these with its degree of specification and complexity, the morpho-generative way to look at the strategy provides a frame to allow us to identify the discourses of the brand.

From this model, with the necessary information, it's easier to draw the cartography of the brand that we are studying. This cartography presents, in a synthesized way, the core of the identity of Nouvel's brand (physical-symbolical forms), its "narrative" structure experience of the Nouvel brand (socio-cultural forms), and its main forms of visible expression (concrete forms). The uses of this cartography are many and diverse. We limited the scope of this article to just a few that we considered the main ones, by distinguishing between its applications in the frame of the visible signs (marketing), of communication (rhetoric of Jean Nouvel), and identity of Jean Nouvel's brand – the *manifesto*.

Acknowledgements

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Since 1989, my research has been organised around interdisciplinary questions that naturally led me to Catastrophe Theory Semiotics on Architecture. The last two decades of my intellectual career correspond to the preparation of the bases of an interdisciplinary model, tied to the modelling of Thom and of Brandt, applied to territorial and societal subjects. During the course of this decade, the academic recognition of my work has intensified considerably by numerous invitations to participate in international networks of related research. I have been invited as an editor and as an organiser of well-established international congresses, to occupy positions of responsibility in international associations, and to open congresses as the keynote speaker.



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