

Conventions, Tours and Other Journeys: Why Architects Must Travel

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SINCE THE PUBLICATION of Dean MacCannell's *The Tourist* in 1976, tourism as a modern cultural phenomenon has gained relative currency in sociological and other, related fields, and has been recognised as a system of structural importance within modernity. Tourism has since received a considerable amount of critical attention, extending to intra-disciplinary reflections on the significance and problematic nature of 'professional travel' of for instance journalists, or anthropologists. Architectural travel and tourism though has not attracted much attention, other than in relation to travel accounts of individual architects, such as Le Corbusier, to name only the most famous. In the light of an increasingly international and mobile architectural scene, it seems appropriate to sketch

This paper attempts to uncover some of the implications which 'architectural travel' as a historical and contemporary phenomenon has within Western architectural production and discourse. Far from being a neutral, pragmatic practice, the journeys of architects appear as a structural part in the constitution of the professional community, and of architectural canons. Based on three exemplary journeys of architects to Athens, it is argued that 'architectural travel' forms and reproduces a mythological system of vital, yet politically ambiguous importance to the architectural profession.

out a more conceptual perspective on architecture as a travelling profession, and part of the phenomenon of tourism. The train of thought brought forward may be seen as an early mapping of a research field, intended to pave the way for the elaboration of a conceptual framework and subsequently the relocation of particular cases in a more systematic context.

This last remark may be taken not only as an indication of where to go, of a horizon, but also as an immediate, verbal, and a-dimensional point of departure: geographical and travel-metaphors, metaphors of movement and displacement are common-place and historically rooted,¹ and figure regularly along with structural (building/construction) metaphors. The affiliation of these groups of tropes is not coincidental, and not only due to

their being of a spatial kind: to an extent they represent flip sides of the same coin. Displacement describes the relocation of meaning as much as construction deals with the redefinition of place. Both operate on the grounds of an overall economy of representation, of memory, maps, and inscriptions.

In the following pages the extension of the triad of travel, building and representation from the metaphorical into the literal shall be discussed: buildings (and architecture) entertain intrinsic relationships not only with representational practices but also with travelling as literal displacement, which in turn deals with representations in various ways, from inscriptions on paper to incisions of city plans on foreign territories. They have to be thought in terms of each other, and it appears that a closer look at the travel activities of builders and architects might be a valuable undertaking to highlight their mutual relationships.

A SPECULATIVE DETOUR in time and a glance at the pre-history of European 'architectural travel' may set the stage for a closer look at its modern manifestations. Historically master-masons and builders have been amongst the earliest 'travelling professionals.' In the West, the history of those who travelled in order to build, reaches back to antiquity, to medieval times, and to the fifteenth and sixteenth century, to cathedral builders and architects of fortresses and castles. These builders created literally 'in the first place' those sites others would henceforth travel to. Logically speaking, once their work was completed, they had deprived themselves of their 'raison

d'être.' For builders travel and travail went together, as suggested by the etymology of the terms.² They had to move on, as the quasi-nomadic mid-wives of a settled society, a travelling paradox.

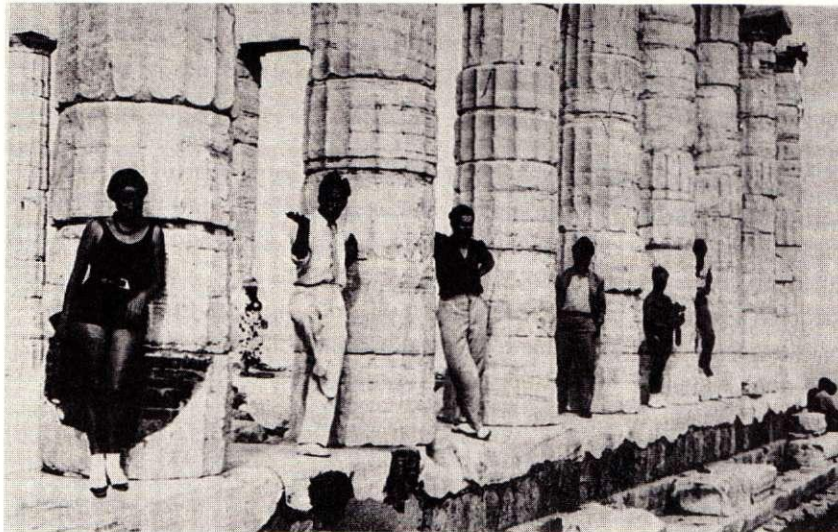
This short side-step illustrates that the static nature of architecture has a reverse side, which is tied to itinerant activities, not only of its occupants, but also of its producers. Incidentally it also appears that the dressing up of an atmospheric scenery, picturing the builder/architect in intimate communion with a site, seems suspiciously easy. It is a cliché that goes down rather well, and has been used by architects as shall be shown.

During the Renaissance a different type of architectural travel emerged: travelling for purely educational and social purposes. The tradition of the Grand-Tour is usually understood as the precursor of certain types of modern travel practices, and as the root of tourism at large. Initially a convention of the aristocracy and of 'gentlemen scholars,' professionally motivated trips to sites of artistic or architectural interest derived from the travels of the so-called connoisseurs. Moreover the early emphasis on social and discursive interaction in sixteenth and seventeenth century travel,³ and the informal meetings along the trajectories of the Grand-Tour, like the parties of the *Prix de Rome*, may be considered early forms of today's (architectural-) conferences and meetings.

The emergence of architects' educational and social travel, as a 'second order mobility,' has to be understood in relation to changing representational techniques and practices from the

fifteenth century onward, and the formation of architecture as a self-conscious professional discipline. With the development of perspectival representation, the relation of visitor/viewer to the architectural site necessarily changed, and so did the significance of travelling to the developing architectural profession. The perceptual sensibilities and epistemological paradigms shifted toward visual, analytical, and later historical modes, and the development of reproduction methods, and of publishing and academic networks all depended on, supported, and altered travel practices in architectural circles, introducing representation as a third term into the equation of travel and building.

Architectural historian Beatriz Colomina has recently discussed the use of mass-media in modern architectural production and discourse. In her book *Publicity and Privacy* she points out the kinship of military, and architectural usage of mass-media, and the literal 'avant-garde' character of modern architecture in its reliance upon these media for the strategic dissemination of its products and ideology.⁴ Colomina is pointing to the kinship between military and architectural operations which, in a different guise, can also be found in the pre-history of architectural travel as an intrinsically ambiguous practice: a fundamental condition of architecture as itinerant activity was (and remains) its vacillation between the destabilisation of places and territories and their consolidation. Building by virtue of subverting existing order through redesignating, renaming, and repossessing of place could be understood



An outing to Cape Sunion at the fourth CIAM conference in Athens: Moncha Sert, Ricardo Ribas, Wells Coates, Josep Torres Claves, and José Luis Sert. (Photo by Ernő Goldfinger in Le Corbusier, *Chartes d'Athènes*, New York, Grossman Publishers, 1973, p.IX)

as a destructive act in its own right, and was indeed often related to military activities: while architecture built up a place and then abandoned it, the military destroyed and occupied it. The relationship between building/architecture and the military in history is reflected in road building and camp layouts on foreign territories, in the rebuilding of occupied territories and last but not least in the traditional joining of responsibilities for architectural and military construction, best illustrated by Vitruvius' *Ten Books on Architecture*. The kinship of architectural and military operations in relation to the use of media on the one hand, and to physical intrusion of places (travelling) on the other hand, backs the assumption of a relationship between travelling and representation, and introduces the triangle of military,

travel, and representation as a reflection and indication of a possibly problematic nature of the link between architecture, travel and representation.

In the following 'travelling architects' will be briefly discussed in the light of general studies on tourism and travel, and three helleno-phile 'couples' shall serve as an illustration, allowing for the formulation of the concluding hypothesis. James Stuart and Nicholas Revett were amongst the earliest Western architects to visit and measure the Acropolis in the early seventeenthcenturies, and probably the most successful in the publication and dissemination of their findings. They were early sightseers or tourists, the avant-garde of a 'second phase' of the Grand Tour, then 'expanding' to Greece. In the eighteenthcenturies the late Karl-Friedrich Schinkel and his

younger Munich colleague, and rival, Leo von Klenze both drew up designs for the Acropolis and for Athens respectively. However, while Klenze actually went to Greece, Schinkel travelled on paper only: he remained home in Berlin and worked from plans. He is the odd-one out of this group. The third couple will feature Le Corbusier and Sigfried Giedion, who a century later cruised across the Mediterranean on their way to the fourth CIAM congress, held in Athens in 1933.

NEW YORK ARTIST Silvia Kolbowski described the tourist as,

...an excessive figure, someone who exists for a limited amount of time in a context to which she is an addition, someone in spite of whom and in addition to whom the life of the culture continues. The tourist is the something else, the anyway, of a culture.⁵

This observation was made at the occasion of the third *Any* conference, amongst an elitist selection of international architects in Barcelona and serves well to prompt a reverse question: could one say that tourists are people, who set out to find something in addition to their normal existence? What then would this be and what do tourists get 'out of' their trips?

Before attempting an answer, one ought to ask whether or not travels for 'educational' or 'professional' reasons qualify as tourism, and might hence be illuminated by recent research into tourism as a category of modern western society. Dean MacCannell gives a vague indication, rather than a rigorous definition, of what he means by the



Wells Coates from the English MARS group at CIAM, visiting Eleusis: "...in a context to which (h)e is an addition." (In Ernő Goldfinger in James Dunnett, 'A Meeting of Minds,' in *Architects' Journal*, vol.179, no. 50 (Dec14th 1983), p.28)



P. Reyner Banham in the Californian desert: "...an excessive figure." (Photo Tim Street-Porter, in P. Reyner Banham, *Scenes in America Deserta*, Cambridge: MIT Press 1989)

title of his book *The Tourist*. Besides conceiving of the tourist (in anticipation of his thesis) as "one of the best models available for modern man in general," 'tourist' "designates ... sightseers, mainly middle-class, who are at this moment deployed throughout the entire world in search of experience."⁶ If MacCannell's snap-shot seems overly simple, engendering in the twentyfive years since its formulation both more subtle and wider formulations, it nevertheless remains a useful starting point. It does indeed provide space for the architect on sight, the building-site having turned into a building-sight. The array of reasons for architects to travel is of course much wider than just 'sightseeing,' and includes the supervision of building sites, conferences, lecture circles, any sort of professional meetings and so on. Nonetheless, architectural sightseeing occupies important enough a position in architects' overall travel agendas to justify an approach of the issue through the category of tourism as sightseeing.

One could assume that architects' interest in seeing the actual building is conditioned solely by the impracticality of displacing buildings, of reproducing them in a satisfactory way, and hence by a professional necessity to travel: architectural tourism would simply appear as a pragmatic enterprise. This however is not necessarily the case and a look at the particular, largely semiological strand of tourism research, that was heralded by MacCannell, will provide a better insight.

Crucial for the understanding of tourism, according to this view, is the concept of 'authenticity.' The idea of authenticity, the adjective of which is

defined in the Oxford Dictionary as ‘genuine’, or ‘reliable,’⁷ is implicitly or explicitly at the heart of every touristic experience. This notion must be understood in the context of modernity’s anxiety over questions of identity and origin, and is entangled in a web of semiotic relationships. It may be seen as both the driving force and eventual crux of tourism. MacCannell established a semiotic model of sightseeing, in which the touristic attraction is understood as sign, composed of a ‘marker,’ representing a sight to a tourist.⁸ The objective of tourists is both to confirm what they know already through the marker, that is any kind of indexical reference or representation, and to transgress through personal experience the limits of the marker.

Unfortunately tourists are trapped in the inter-dependence of the different terms of this equation. As both John Frow and Jonathan Culler have noted, the search for the authentic is, at least in theory, doomed to failure. Culler writes,

the paradox, the dilemma of authenticity, is that to be *experienced* as authentic it must be *marked* as authentic, but when it is marked as authentic it is mediated, a sign of itself, and hence not authentic in the sense of unspoiled.⁹

To manage the fatal demand and supply of authenticity, its sort of self-effacing economy, touristic sites are generally organised in various stages: the ‘front’ regions function as safety valves to the tourists’ search for the authentic, located predominantly in the ‘back’ regions.¹⁰

Does this vicious circle of the authentic hold within the architectural



“A view of the Eastern Portico of the Parthenon”: the mosque is not mentioned in the text, but is faithfully represented in the etching. (In James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens*, New York: Arno Press 1980, vol.II, chap.I, pl.I)

world? Is the sight-seeing architect, whether in or in front of a building, part of this scheme? Architects tend to knock on walls, feel for materials, strive for the ‘complete tour’ including peripheral rooms and remote corners of the buildings, in the hope to find the original furniture and decoration, and often remain regretfully aware of the loss of the original surrounding situation. This yearning for completeness, historical truthfulness, and original states may well be understood as a search for authenticity in MacCannell’s sense. Yet does this provoke a similar semantic overturn of ‘touristic capital,’ and redefinition of local spaces?¹¹

James Stuart and Nicholas Revett’s 1751 expedition to Greece appears as an early instance of such efforts within modern architectural travel. Sponsored by the *Society of Dilettanti*, their jour-

ney was intended to provide exact records of antique monuments and ruins. Studying the original Greek architecture implied both a confirmation of what had been marked as Antiquity since the Renaissance, and an ambitious attempt to look behind the Roman stage, to the purer states of classical architecture. The results of their work were published in 1762 in three volumes entitled *The Antiquities of Athens*¹² and greatly influenced the Greek revival.

The reproduction of the antique monuments by Stuart and Revett ‘cleared’ the visited sites for architecture and at the same time built them up as a particular complex. Setting foot on the Acropolis and depicting it in a specific way, they made the site available for investment in contemporary and future architectural speculations. To a degree this act of approp-

riation may be seen as semantically equivalent to the act of building, in that it re-placed a site into a foreign or new context. However as in the attempt to identify the authentic, the establishment of a reading of the Acropolis set in motion a semantic chain reaction, instead of attributing meaning for good.

A turning point in the travel history of architects, Stuart and Revett's enterprise reorganised the architectural discourse of their time. This also precipitated the reorganisation of the architectural community. Not only did their journey initiate the formation of a new community of architects that would henceforth go to Greece, but it also reinforced and restructured the architectural community by reordering the architectural canon.

MacCannell and sociologist John Urry have noted the crucial role which tourism plays in the formation of social group identities across Europe, by providing a 'touristic code,' which, as a powerful and widespread modern consensus in Western society, acts as a stabilising force.¹³ This observation seems to be applicable to the architectural community, which is defining itself to a large extent through the establishment of, and agreement to the network of buildings and sites that figure on mental maps and in architectural publications. One could argue that Stuart and Revett offer an early example of a dynamic that governs tourism at large, as well as architectural travel, in modernity: that is the wavering of the tourist or travelling architect between the peripheral and the central in terms of cultural location, representing two ever shifting extremes. While new discoveries relocate peri-

pheries at the centre, agreement as to what is worthwhile seeing and how, slows the shifting down and stabilises relations. Yet, the conversion of the peripheral into the centre prompts a countermove in search of the different or special, and so on. There is thus a dynamic of discovery, understanding and recognition, that is set into motion by the proliferation of representation, as soon as meaning is attributed and incorporated into the home territory.

The observation that there is on the tourists' side a reinforcement of identity as well as community, suggests that on the other hand the assuming gaze of the architect as tourist may contribute to the destabilisation of the identity of the visited place. One may argue that the professional assumption of a privilege in 'understanding places' allows for an uninhibited approach, and intrusion into the semantics and identity of the site by the architect. Importantly, 'ordinary' tourists are often intuitively aware of their ambiguous situation. In his essay *Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia* John Frow asserts,

that every tourist ... *denies* belonging to the class of tourists at some level. Hence a certain fantasised dissociation from the others, – from the rituals of tourism, is built into almost every discourse and almost every practice of tourism. This is the phenomenon of touristic shame, a 'rhetoric of moral superiority,' ...¹⁴

Firstly an assumed superiority, moral or social, of the traveller over the tourist splits tourism into those who make it into the 'back' regions – 'organic' tourists who manage to access authenticity, and the ordinary tourists who

slip past the real thing because they are not engaged or apt enough. Secondly, and somewhat ironically, 'ordinary' tourists may be well aware and ashamed of the intrusive character which the search for the 'back' region could have, while 'travellers,' who by virtue of their superior status may feel entitled to explore at will, may never question their attitude.

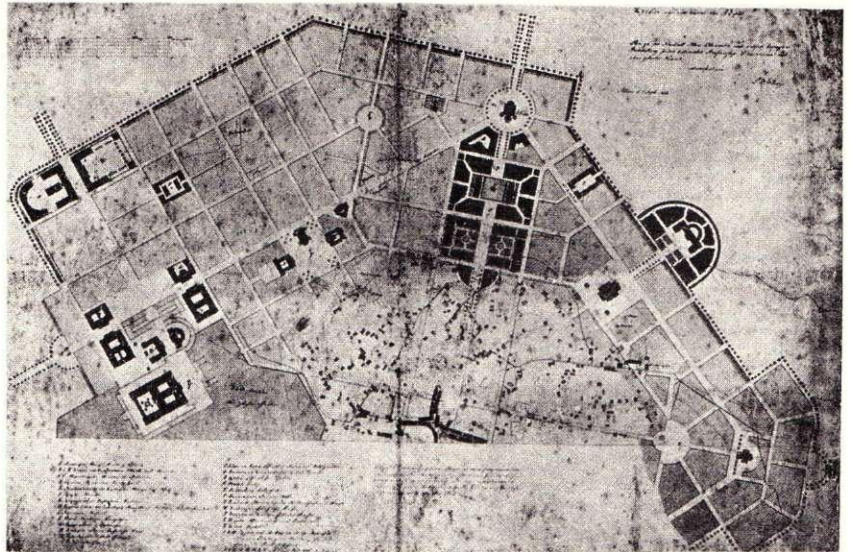
For architects the 'phenomenon of touristic shame' never seemed to have much relevance indeed: they perceive themselves in general as being 'on the legitimate side.' This seems all the more suspicious, as other 'touristic professionals' such as journalists and anthropologists have preoccupied themselves with intense self-reflection on this issue. Anthropology for instance has extensively questioned the possibility of 'accessing' a community, as well as assumptions about the neutrality of the visitors' presence.

The reasons for architecture's oblivion or ignorance may, as suggested, be found in various underlying, legitimising assumptions of architects. As noted earlier it is common amongst architects to believe in a kind of necessary and natural communion with 'sites.' By virtue of a professional affinity, duty, and competence they might easily claim a prerogative to the experience of a site. The belief in specialist competence implies certain epistemological assumptions about architecture as a discipline, and a trust in some universal essence inherent in all build structures, making them available to evaluation within the larger system of architecture and hence accessible to the architect. This is an attitude which resembles the universalising

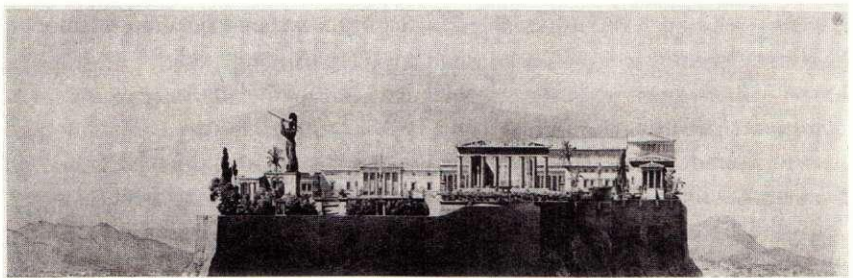
quest of eighteenth century travellers, allowing for the fresh, curious and direct look at the ‘indigenous,’ and which in architecture seems to have survived the centuries in good working condition. While buildings and sites may thus be apprehended as natural objects of scrutiny by the travelling architect, they could moreover be considered unalterable by, and insensitive to intrusion.

The business of incorporation and appropriation of sites does not stop at a purely representational level but extends to projections, which are made possible by representations in the first place. At this point the architect acts beyond the tourist, whose impact on the foreign site is both broader and less direct. Karl Friedrich Schinkel has never been in Athens yet he nevertheless drew up an ambitious, if ideal, project for a Royal Palace on the Acropolis. On the other hand Leo von Klenze did visit Athens, a fact which by then no longer seemed an extravaganza. He claimed to be exhaustively informed about the local circumstances although it took less than three months from his arrival in Athens, and first involvement with the project¹⁵ to the presentation of his plans.¹⁶ The fact that he eventually found himself in charge, seems to indicate the advantage of experience over representation, but the important thing is that both architects would be able to design for Athens in the first place.

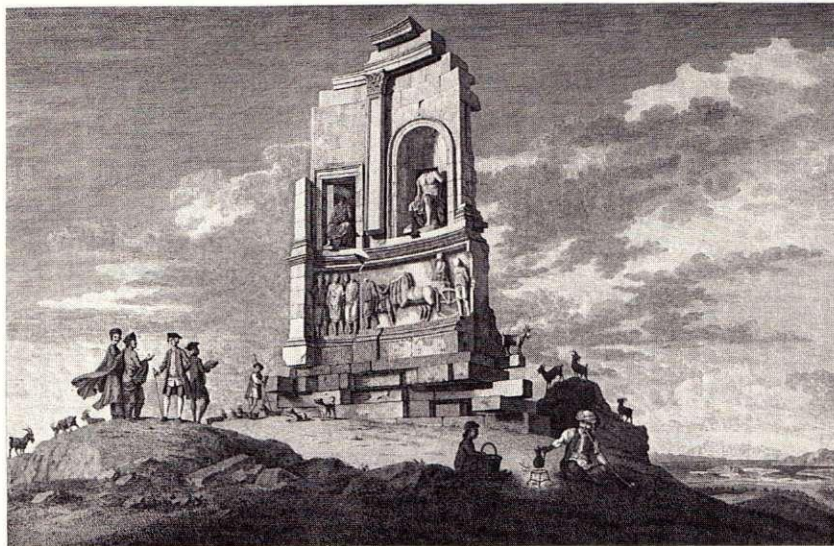
Stuart and Revett’s seemingly passive recording, together with Schinkel’s projective, and Klenze’s realised work for Athens, were closely tied to the respective political situations in Greece. Generally the potential of places and



Leo von Klenze’s urban plan for Athens: a symmetrical layout embracing the old town at the foot of the Acropolis, which should be “freed from all bad buildings of barbarian origin.” (In Oswald Hederer, *Leo von Klenze Persönlichkeit und Werk*, München: Callway 1964/1981, p.145; quote by Hederer, *ibid*, p.143)



“Design for a Palace on the Acropolis” by Karl-Friedrich Schinkel, 1834. (In *Karl-Friedrich Schinkel 1781-1841*, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin: Henschelverlag 1982)



At the "Monument of Philopappus": "On the foreground Mr. Revett and myself [Stuart] ...Our Janizary is making coffee, which we drank here; the boy sitting down with his hand in a basket, attends with our cups and saucers." (In James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens*, New York: Arno Press 1980, vol.III, chap.V, pl.I)

sites to 'open up' to appropriation by architects was, and still is, conditioned by political circumstances.¹⁷ The history of colonial city-planning is the most obvious testimony to this fact, and presents a set of moral, political, and aesthetic questions, which are actively discussed within 'post-colonial' discourses. As another instance of the interdependence of architecture and political relationships, the fascination with 'exotic' architecture in the nineteenth century may be cited. It led to such enterprises as the (re)construction of a so-called *Rue du Caire* (Cairo Street) in Paris at the occasion of the 1889 Exposition Universelle, to name but one well-known example.¹⁸ This particular kind of cultural dislocation was closely related to the imperialist imposition of the French Beaux-Art model onto the colonies, and has also

received a fair deal of critical attention in recent years. There exists in fact a kind of anagrammatic relationship between architectural events like the Cairo Street, colonial city-planning and architectural tourism, in that they are constituted by similar sets of political and cultural ingredients. Yet while the imposture of colonial architecture, as well as the displays of what was considered 'exotic' architecture, are taken on by scholars, the travelling architect has not played a role in explaining the share of architecture in the history of Western domination of the world. To name one more example, literary criticism has engaged in travel literature, revealing hidden agendas, silent acting and not so subtle effects of imperialist rule, while architectural criticism has failed with a few exceptions to devote any particular

interest in travel patterns and accounts of architects. If the import of 'the other' to Paris is revealing to us, is the inverse, i.e. the Western architect going to travel to 'other' architectures, not also of interest? One might argue that absorbing images, locations and (air-)miles always also entails a reproduction of meaning, and that the travelling architect may in fact pave the way for certain forms of domination.

New York architect Lebbeus Woods had no inhibitions about residing for months in Zagreb and in bombed Sarajevo, where he projected his dystopic futurism on the destroyed town, while scrawling his personal impressions in a most creative looking way into his diary and later onto the white walls of a London Gallery.¹⁹ The fascination of architects with destruction brings us back to the kindred involvement of the military and of architecture with travel and representations.

In fact the structural affinity of architecture and military action seems somewhat confirmed in modernity in an internalised form: Beatriz Colomina has emphasised the character of modern architecture as avant-garde, becoming in the process a mass-movement, depending on communications equipment and the exploitation of mass-media. The representation of architecture gains priority over building and over the experience of buildings, turning into a kind of travel, that conditions, and depends on the economy of representations that travel provides in the first place. This 'modern' relation of architecture with the media seems to a certain degree to make travel obsolete for architects. Colomina refers to architectural historian and

promoter Reyner Banham who, as she puts it

noted that the modern movement was the first movement in the history of art based exclusively on 'photographic evidence' rather than on personal experience, drawings or conventional books... [He] was referring to the fact that the industrial buildings that became icons for the modern movement were not known to the architects from 'direct' experience (only from photographs)...²⁰

Ironically the architectural critic's own most notorious trip lead him into the American desert, a place devoid of construction, and maybe the only one which needed to be travelled to as there was nothing to be represented. The best known picture of this journey shows Banham himself, deliberately out of place on his folding-bike in the middle of a dried out salt lake.

This of course is not the end of the story. Another telling of it is the stubborn conviction amongst architects that the experience of a building allows for an unmediated appreciation of, or engagement with, some inherent spatial quality, otherwise hidden. The physical experience of a building is invested with the potential to reveal in an unmediated way an essential quality. While the quest for phenomenological impact may ultimately fail to inspire more than a reflection of subjectivised representations, it is nevertheless an indication of the power that the concept of sightseeing still holds for architects.

This power has been exploited most successfully by the fourth CIAM congress. Beyond the representations of



Le Corbusier lecturing on board *Patris II*: Sigfried Giedion and Helena Syrkus in the background. (In Jos Bosman, 'Sur le *Patris II*, de Marseille à Athènes,' in *Le Corbusier et la Méditerranée*, Musées de Marseille, Marseille: Edition parenthèses 1981, p.75)

Stuart and Revett and the projections of Schinkel and Klenze, Le Corbusier and Giedion by 1933 went further with their travel. Le Corbusier must have realised to what extent the coupling of travelling and representation through diverse media could be exploited. Instead of publishing his own drawings and notes, as after his first travel to Greece, at the fourth CIAM conference he inserted himself into the picture by making his own person the subject *and* the object of the travelogue or travel-graph. In doing so he was 'downgrading' the place or site to a stage, the primary function of which was to endow the main actors with its assumed values and back them with its symbolic potential. Meanwhile engagement in an intimate dialogue with the site and sensual indulgence were also part of the script, 'brought to the public' so it could profit from it too. A five day outing on a small boat by some twenty

participants of the conference was described by Giedion as follows.

...I should mention the cruise among the Aegean islands to which some of us devoted a short respite from congress labours at the beginning of August.... [] We sailed over a glassy sea to the island of Aegina. Here some of us, led by Le Corbusier, dived overboard and swam to land. When the rest reached the shore we climbed to those boldly planned temples of the Aeginans which had served as prototypes of the Parthenon. This was the first insular monument we saw. Its form and proportions were in perfect keeping with the small scale of the little island – the sober contours of the eminence it stood on dominating land and sea alike. Corbusier sat behind a column drawing in his blue sketch-book; Van Eesteren had something to say about the lessons of this 'cultural landscape'. Otherwise – perhaps because what we saw in stones, or buildings, or the face on the ground stirred familiar cords in us – we mostly contemplated in silence.

At nightfall we anchored in the harbour of Posos, the last of the fertile islands. Those we were to see later, which were clothed with forests in Homer's days, are now bare and the standard of life on them is shockingly low. At midnight we sailed again, but found little sleep under the electric brilliance of a full southern moon.²¹

The portrayal of an immediate understanding of a culture, more eternal than nature, did away with any potential disjuncture still present in the drawings of Stuart and Revett, in which a mosque appears prominently

'as is' in the middle of the Parthenon. Rather a film by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy made on board the ship and in Athens, juxtaposed antique monuments and modern engineering work into a seamless succession of equally serene impressions.²² To the fourth CIAM congress, travel itself was lending its prestige. The trip as such and particularly the journey were represented in photos, film, personal accounts and other writings. Travel was no longer instrumental, but took on an intrinsic value. Le Corbusier in his writings about the congress significantly made use of the trope of travelling as ascendance to a higher moral or mental state. Le Corbusier's account of the trip, together with Giedion's, embedded the journey between a point of origin and a point of arrival, respectively located in the gothic chapel of the castle at La Sarraz, where the congress was conceived and created, and "the discussions... held in the open court of the University at the foot of the Acropolis."²³ There it found its apogee, conjuring a cathartic trajectory from the dark recesses of the European middle-ages to the ethereal light, and timeless glories of classical antiquity...

Out of the simple functionality of the boat and the abstract atmosphere of the sea, the ideal modern community emerged,

the cruise ship was turned into meetings rooms, committee rooms, and secretarial offices. There was only one sound: the hissing and splashing of water along the hull; there was only one atmosphere: youthfulness, trust, modesty, and professional conscience.²⁴

And Le Corbusier's tone was echoed

by José Luis Sert,

the Patris II was a one class boat, all the facilities being accessible to everyone without distinction. All passengers were congress members or their friends and guests, all sharing a community of interests, eager to discuss everything related to the search for a better urban environment.²⁵

Isolated from the world, subject only to the benevolent impact of the elements, the trip was described as an a-political, serene, archaic and a-historical space, defying the signs of the time. In this placid ambience, the reigning paradigm was later depicted as one of a spiritualised rationality, and scientificity or could one say alchemy: the boat as laboratory, in which the ultimate formula to solve the posed problem was eventually found, in adherence to strictly 'rational' methods, in a quasi religious faith.

Life on board may also be read as a perfect representation of the four functions that were later formulated in the Athens Charter: in ideally uniting habitation, leisure, work and traffic it was a harmonised microcosm of social pacification. Le Corbusier referred to the conference in his 1943 publication 'The Athens Charter' with an exuberant terminology: 'born under a lucky star,' the congress was 'surrounded by glamour,' 'presided over by a thrilling architecture and nature,' held on 'a beautiful cruising vessel,' during 'radiant summer days of fervent work,' and 'with a precious result,' the Athens Charter. The encompassing significance of the declaration, which would precipitate the urbanism of modern times, was allowed to arise out of the privileged spatial situation: the isolation of the

boat provided a somewhat Olympian perspective on the rest of the world. Furthermore the 33 city-plans, which the congress was working with on board, appeared as ritual objects, concentrating the forces of an exclusive constellation.²⁶ The presentation of the plans though was not without irony. Hailed as sophisticated and abstracted representational tools they were in a sense testifying to the modern architect's emancipation from the need to travel. Planning could be handled as abstract scientific procedure. Yet the plans were presented at an occasion where the journey would in the first place allow for their potential to be revealed. The fourth CIAM was portrayed, in this way, as a perfect *Gesamtkunstwerk* in architectural travel, revealing itself as a well-spring of symbolic potential.

One way of conceptualising the character of the conference as a carefully formulated story-line may be to understand it as a semantic system, that could be described as mythical in Roland Barthes' sense: the congress as sign (CIAM signifying a group of architects travelling to Greece) turns into the signifier of a complex association of modernity and antiquity.²⁷ While this effect is of course by no means particular to travel, or to architecture, the specific usefulness of travel to architecture in terms of semantic potential is related to the architect's assumed relation to place and to representations of place. Travel in this transaction is no longer simply signified, but becomes a signifier, a medium, to carry 'larger issues' itself.

One may want to cross-check how this relates to Beatriz Colomina's and Reyner Banham's suspicion of the

increasing obsolescence of physical travel. Colomina has argued that with the proliferation of representational material in the mass-media paradoxically 'meaning' seems to be much more persistent than it would be in an actual building. In fact a series of immutable snapshots replaces the unfolding of meaning in time. Being somewhat an eternalisation, there is no origin, and the legends of architecture are absorbed into a synchronic media-event. Is it possible that travelling in this context, i.e. the paradigmatic dilemma of modernity's coping with tradition, takes on a function that transcends its usual role within building and representational modes of architecture, and even as representable ingredient to architectural ideology and semantics?

Travelling is a form of communication, suggested Michel de Certeau's conception of travel as narrative,

certainly ... travelling substitute[s] for exits, for going away and coming back in, which were formerly made available by a body of legends that places nowadays lack. Physical moving about has the itinerant function of yesterdays or today's 'superstitions.' Travel... is a substitute for the legends that used to open up space to something different. What does travel ultimately produce, if not, by a sort of reversal, 'an exploration of the deserted places of my memory' the return to nearby exoticism by way of a detour through distant places, and the 'discovery' of relics and legends.²⁸

For de Certeau travelling is about inventing, or rather about reinventing places, stories and identity, and about allowing in a sense for a myth of origin to be recovered.

One could hold that 'the architect' is actually depending on a mythology constituted by means of travel(-ling) that goes beyond Barthian semiology. In this respect CIAM, as travel, would not only be surrounded by a myth, or be a 'myth' itself, but be part of the reinvention of a mythology. By extension, rather than being a 'piece' of a narration it would be a narrating itself, an enactment and an invention of an architectural mythology at the same time. If this was so, then there would obviously be two forms of 'mythological activity' at work; in Barthes' sense of mythologies, as a type of speech and hence communication, of casting objects and ideas into ever-shifting layers of signification, while naturalising and dehistoricising them in the process, and somehow in Mircea Eliade's 'religious' sense of mythology, as an institution offering paradigmatic models of behaviour.²⁹

The latter of these would exist as an allegorical figure beyond the particular trip and be made up of chosen bits and pieces of experience and their reproductions (as opposed to representation). It would be reaching further than the actual accounts of the journey and the congress. As a collection of images, it would indicate a possibility, in reference to a map of relations and trajectories (rather than sites), in need to be reiterated by architects in an ongoing movement, in an endless repetition, supporting the initial story, which in turn would only be a repetition of yet another story.

Conferences like the *Any* meetings held since 1991 at various locations including Los Angeles, Hufuin (Japan), Barcelona, New York and others could be seen as part of this reiteration, in

which travel as such assumes meaning, beyond the sightseeing. Usually travel appears as a purely circumstantial attribute to the conferences and so do the meeting-places, as mere intersection-points. The introduction to the publication of the third *Any* conference, called *Anyway*, displays in spite of its name no recognition of the strange trajectories on which the conference hinges. Only somewhat belatedly a relation of 'site and content' was perceived: Cynthia Davidson disarmingly admits, "it was never thought that site itself would affect content."³⁰

In fact, neither are the sites of a conference neutral crossing-points, nor is the journey a neutral and pragmatic change of place 'in order to' – that is, designed to meet other architects. Rather it should be seen as part of a multiple movement and mobility whose significance lies beyond the mere connection of two points. If Davidson writes that the politics of Barcelona along with the elections, which coincidentally took place the day of the event, were infusing the conference itself with politics, this seems rather naïve. Insofar as locality provides a temporary substantiation and concretisation to a set of professional projections, its role appears to be coincidental and operational rather than specific and interactive. Rather these events are occasions and work as markers of a form of spatial practice, a practising of theory which not only creates sites of discussion, and discursive topoi in the figurative sense, but which are part of the construction of an extensive topography of architectural power-relations, interspersed with personalised psycho-geographies that depend and bear on the actual ways and sites of tra-

vel and encounter as much as the other way round.

Realisation of the relevance of travel in these terms, that is as a crucial and complex ingredient to architectural ideology and self-definition, might bring about some insight into architectural attitudes 'within,' as well as 'without,' on foreign grounds, but most importantly into the liminal zones of the within and without of architecture.

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Notes

1. See Georges Van den Abbeele, *Travel as Metaphor: From Montaigne to Rousseau*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1992
2. *Travail*, French for work, and *travel*, from the old French *traveillier*, are assumed to have the same latin origin, *tripaliare* meaning a form of torturing, involving three sticks (*tri* and *palium*).
3. Judith Adler, 'Origins of Sightseeing', in *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol.16, no.1 (1989), pp.7-29
4. Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass-Media*, Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press 1994. See also Elisabeth Diller's and Ricardo Scofidio's discussion of War-Tourism in *Back to the Front, Tourisms of War*, New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press 1994 as well as Paul Virilio's *Bunker Archeology*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press 1994
5. Silvia Kolbowski, 'Anyway I'm sorry' in Cynthia C. Davidson ed., *Anyway*, New York, NY: Anyone Corporation in Association with Rizzoli International Publications, distributed by St. Martin's Press 1994, pp.168-173, quote from p. 171
6. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: a New Theory of the Leisure Class*, New York: Schocken books 1976, p.1
7. Judy Pershall and Bill Trumble eds., *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*, New York: Oxford University Press 1995, p.92
8. Dean MacCannell, *ibdm*, pp.109-110
9. Jonathan Culler, 'Semiotics of Tourism', *American Journal of Semiotics*, vol.1, no.1-2 (1981), pp.127-140, p.137
10. Dean MacCannell after Erwing Goffman, *ibdm*, p.92ff, emph. his
11. In MacCannell's analysis tourism appears as the central anthropo-sociological structure of the 'modern condition' of the Western world. He does not specify what 'modernity' for him encompasses. With respect to architecture it seems that tourism, as a structural phenomenon of modernity in MacCannell's sense, reaches back to the Renaissance.
12. James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens*, vol.I-III, New York: Arno Press 1980
13. See John Urry, *Consuming Places*, London and New York: Routledge 1995, p. 169
14. John Frow, 'Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia,' in *October*, no.57 (1991), p.146, emph. his
15. His plan was in fact based on an earlier project by Kleantes and Schaubert, two Berlin architects trained like Klenze under Friedrich Gilly. See Oswald Hederer, *Leo von Klenze Persönlichkeit und Werk*, München: Callway 1964/1981, pp.140-147
16. See Oswald Hederer, *ibdm*; Leo Ritter von Klenze, 1784-1864, *Sammlung architektonischer Entwürfe welche ausgeführt oder für die Ausführung entworfen wurden*, Worms: Werner'sche Verlagsgesellschaft 1983; and any of the major works on Karl-Friedrich Schinkel
17. See for instance Yannis Tsiomis, 'Athènes et Washington,' in Jean-Louis Cohen and Hubert Damisch eds., *Americanisme et Modernité*, Paris: Flammarion 1993, pp.121-135
18. See Peter Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World Fairs, 1851-1939*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1988; and Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1992
19. See Lebbeus Woods, *War and Architecture-Rat I Arhitektura*, New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press 1993; the mentioned exhibition took place at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, in 1994.
20. Beatriz Colomina, *ibdm*, p14
21. Sigfried Giedion, 'CIAM at Sea -The Background of the Fourth (Athens) Congress', *Architects' Yearbook*, vol.3, 1959, pp.38-39
22. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *CIAM 1933*, Zurich, Archiv Institut GTA, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, (Video Copy)
23. Sigfried Giedion, 'Introduction,' in José Luis Sert, *Can Our Cities Survive?*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1941, p.X
24. Le Corbusier, *Chartes d'Athènes*, New York, Grossman Publishers, 1973, p.25
25. José Luis Sert in Le Corbusier, *ibdm*, p.VII
26. Sigfried Giedion stated that, "all plans were executed on the base of the plan of Amsterdam and completed with a sign-language, which rendered the problems obvious at first glance," while Ernő Goldfinger more modestly remembered that at the exhibition in Athens, "there were, I understand, 33 cities presented - obviously impossible to examine in detail or to form an opinion." See Sigfried Giedion, *ibdm*, p.421, and Ernő Goldfinger in James Dunnett, 'A Meeting of Minds,' in *Architects' Journal*, vol.179, no. 50 (Dec 14th 1983), pp.26-30, quote from p.29
27. See Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, New York: Hill and Wang 1985
28. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1984/1988, pp.106,107
29. See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane, The Nature of Religion*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Company 1987
30. Cynthia C. Davidson, *ibdm*, p.16