DELEUZE CONNECTIONS

Deleuze and the City

Edited by Hélène Frichot, Catharina Gabrielsson and Jonathan Metzger

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'It is not the elements or the sets which define the multiplicity. What defines it is the AND, as something which has its place between the elements or between the sets. AND, AND, AND – stammering.'

Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*

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Introduction

What a City Can Do

Hélène Frichot, Catharina Gabrielsson and Jonathan Metzger

This book rests on a conviction that philosophy is crucially important not only for advancing knowledge of how cities work, but also for allowing us to envisage new forms of urban life in a more sustainable future. The present volume, while strangely belated in an era obsessed by cities, is therefore a timely addition to the *Deleuze Connections* series. Whether expressed implicitly or explicitly, established through references scattered across their writings, the city is ever-present in both the independent and collaborative work of Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze. If the city and philosophy share the same contingent birth, are reciprocally produced and remain mutually dependent (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 43; Beistegui 2012: 18–19), it seems only fit that what we know as the city today – the flows of bodies, forces and matter, the overheated centres, the sprawls and the margins – would generate a thinking such as theirs: a challenge to the very notion of form or identity, including that of philosophy itself. In fact, if what the city primarily generates is a non-philosophy, making that which we call philosophy possible (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 218), it may perhaps also generate a non-city, an 'outside' to the city that can no longer be envisaged as the wilderness beyond, nor as external forces confronting the (now digital) city walls, but as the element of struggle that stirs trouble on the city's striations from within.

Following the ethos of Deleuze and Guattari, with this compilation we aim to dispel the old question of what the city *is*, asking instead what it can *do*. In the first instance it imposes its boundary lines everywhere, transforming the world into centres or peripheries in an increasingly rigid segmentarity (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 212). There are complicated distinctions between town, city, *polis* and the State apparatus – none of which are privileged, all of which are somehow co-constitutive – but there is no evolutionary progression between them: each city has

its own plane of consistency, its own located histories and specificities. The city, any-city-whatever, is situated amid mental, social and environmental ecologies that serve as witness and backdrop to emergent subjectivities, collective enunciations, continuously heterogeneous and confused admixtures of the natural and the cultivated. Across the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, the city is conjured up in all its contradictions, a near ubiquitous milieu, enfolded in global capitalism, but also contingent, geographically secured and marked by distinctions. Constituted by complexes of forces, encounters and relations, the city is a machinic assemblage, and neither smooth nor striated nor even holey space can exhaust the many points of passage, entry and egress its dynamic system entails.

What we argue for here are primary matters of concern when it comes to assessing contemporary urban situations. To consider the subject of cities today we must think beyond the logic of forms identified with the urban fabric, even beyond the more fluid socio-ecological approaches to the city, both serving as platforms for dominant notions of 'urban sustainability'. Any such coding carries the related insistence of ever more virulent forms of neoliberal market capitalism, what Guattari has called Integrated World Capitalism and what Maurizio Lazzarato characterises as the relation between machinic enslavement and social subjection (Lazzarato 2014). The ramifications of what 'matters' in urban situations intensify when we consider how violence and disease have contributed to the planning and occupations of cities, past and present, and how both wealth and poverty are outcomes of cities, generating intensities and voids, processes of eviction and segregation. The city is embroiled and co-opted and co-constituted with diverse and dynamic, affirmative and negative, relations and compositions, and whether through acts of planning or the absence of planning, through acts of terrorism or under the guise of the protection of a population, these processes are channelled through collective political imaginations that emerge from and forge the city in its actual and virtual existence.

Considering the city along these trajectories is greatly informed by the work of Deleuze and Guattari. Indeed, we would argue that a Deleuzian approach is indispensible for the project of 'rethinking the epistemology of the urban', recently advocated by Brenner and Schmid as 'an open-ended interplay between critique (of inherited traditions of urban theory and contemporary urban ideologies), epistemological experimentation (leading to the elaboration of new concepts and methods) and concrete research (on specific contexts, struggles and transformations)' (Brenner and Schmid 2015: 161). Engaging with concepts situated within an

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ontology of immanence, defined by multiplicities, events and becomings, we have asked authors to especially consider *assemblage*, *haecceity*, *affect* and *multiplicity*, and more generally the processes of *coding*, *de-* and *re-territorialisation* of entities ongoing in and through urban settings. Together, these concepts and loci of concern serve as a loose framework that articulates the chapters of this book, that in extending from the explicit references to 'the city' in Deleuze and Guattari's writings follow their philosophical project closely.[1]

From Urban Conditions to Sustainable Cities

Thinking today what a city can do is to engage, explicitly or not, with the inexorable process of diversification and specialisation that followed upon the postmodern 'rediscovery' of the city in the 1980s. Postmodernism was obsessed with defining 'urban conditions' as part of a project of redefining the status of knowledge, power, culture and politics with the advent of a new mode of technological and late-capitalist globalisation. With the shift from topographical to topological thinking, however – as illustrated, for instance, by reorientations in cultural geography (Murdoch 2006) – the neat progression of historical epochs signalled by the prefix 'post' has become obsolete. Deleuze has been enormously influential in this reorientation by way of the impact of his transcendental empiricism and through the 'geophilosophy' elaborated in collaboration with Guattari. In his extended essay *The Three Ecologies* (2000), Guattari stresses the ecological effects of concepts, values and ideas on the material built environment. Urging us to think transversally across three ecological registers – mental, social and environmental – Guattari emphasises the necessity to confront our enslavement in global capitalism. In reconfiguring the sharp distinctions between economy, society and nature imposed by 'sustainable development' policy-makers, this is not only a call for trans- or interdisciplinary thinking, but a radical undermining of such categories. In a postscript to this compilation, 'For an Urban Machinic Ecology', Gary Genosko elaborates further on the significance of Guattari's understanding of cities as mega-machines composed of overlapping human and non-human entities and relations. Deleuze and Guattari are of central importance for the 'ecological turn' in the humanities and social sciences, and their call to think complexity and for complex thinking remains a challenge (Herzogenrath 2009), especially within an empiricist and policy-driven field like urban planning.

The massive amount of research conducted today in the name of

sustainable urban development, resilient cities and 'smart cities growth' proceeds from a point of departure that is remarkably similar to the ontology devised by Deleuze and Guattari, but with a notable absence of their criticality. While research on urban metabolism, for instance, conceives cities as complex forms of self-organisation, constituted as adaptive networks that are linked across temporal and spatial scales in non-linear ways, it is frequently marked by an inability to seriously consider issues of power, politics and agency that unavoidably emerge when investigating notions of sustainability. An oversimplified path of evolution from postmodern urban conditions to our present-day discourse on sustainable cities, accompanied by a shift from a socio-cultural to a technical-scientific explanatory basis, has impacted on how cities are currently explained, described and projected. The greater challenge of understanding the city as material-semiotic conundrum requires that a precarious position be taken up between modes of subjectification and machinic enslavement, which cannot be grasped within a technical-scientific paradigm nor exclusively as socio-cultural phenomena. A number of chapters in this volume offer resistance to any attempt at a one-dimensional pinning-down of 'the urban', such as those performative reductionisms produced by orthodox Marxism, technocratic managerialism or neoliberal capitalism and its profit-based motivation.

With *Deleuze and the City*, we hope to show how the geophilosophy of Deleuze and Guattari is a matter of urgent concern for urban planners, architects, philosophers, geographers and spatial thinkers addressing the topic of sustainable cities today. As elaborated in Janet McGaw's chapter 'Imagining Portland's Future Past: Lessons from Indigenous Placemaking in a Colonial City', the non-linear and contradictory passages of urban development always constitute 'holey stories' of entangled smooth migrations and spatial striations. Colonial histories and ways of living, like those presently dominating places like Portland, Australia, tend to ignore any such transversal connections at their own peril, McGaw adds, in the face of unfolding ecological crises. Further problematising the conventional maintenance of borders between nature and culture, Jean Hillier suggests that the bacteria *Treponema pallidum* – better known as syphilis – actually planned the city of Melbourne. In her chapter 'Deterritorialising the Face of the City: How *Treponema pallidum* Planned Melbourne', Hillier challenges Melbourne's heritage planners to rethink the historical folding-together of the planes of reference of health/medicine, town planning and moral purity which contributed to stratifying Melbourne as the city it has become today. Addressing the dominant discourse on urban development, merging

policy-making with real-estate interests, Hélène Frichot and Jonathan Metzger demonstrate in 'Never Believe that the City Will Suffice to Save Us! Stockholm Gentri-Fictions' how the best intentions with respect to producing sustainable cities can quickly devolve into stratagems for marketing urban neighbourhoods, and take issue with the very assumption that the city is the environment-world that will save us, the human species, from ourselves.

Machinic Assemblages and Schizoanalysis

The conception of cities as machinic assemblages is key for identifying the powerful role cities play in Deleuze and Guattari's writings. It seems we cannot avoid this term when addressing the dynamic, messy, perpetually self-differentiating complex of becoming-city, nor when we attempt to capture the diagrammatic forces of urban environments. The term assemblage (*agencement*) has become paramount in social science research that ventures to go beyond the standard categorisations (Farías and Bender 2009), perhaps even to the point of exhaustion, and thus Guattari's explanation serves as a useful reminder:

> Deleuze and I forged the concept of 'arrangement' [*agencement*] which originally belonged to the domain of scientific logic. It's a broader, more all-encompassing notion because it doesn't only designate an unconscious formation, but also relates to imaginary representations, to language chains, to economic, political, aesthetic, microsocial etc. semiotics. Compared to 'complex' it is a notion whose comprehension is weaker, but whose extension is greater, enabling categories of diverse origins not to be excluded from the 'complex' field, which in turn graft onto other concepts like 'machine'. Thus we speak of 'machinic arrangements' for eventual association with 'collective arrangements of enunciation'. (Guattari 1995b: 40–1)

Importantly, Deleuze and Guattari have no claims to universality – they see their concepts as tools. With respect to importing *agencement* as an organisational concept into the social field, however, Guattari argues that it 'might help to configure the situation, to come up with cartographies capable of identifying and eluding certain simplistic conceptions concerning class struggle' (Guattari 1995b: 43). In superseding the typologies in post-Marxist thought – whether it's the city or the factory that constitutes the privileged site of political struggle – *agencement* brings forth the open-ended dynamics of power relations everywhere, in any spatio-temporal configuration. Reverting to the precise conceptual significance in the work of Deleuze and Guattari thus endows us

with a sharper thinking tool than working with assemblage as a blurred label for complex arrangements. Notably, addressing the city in terms of *agencement* is also to address the State-apparatus, bearing in mind the distinction between *nomos* and *logos* that Deleuze and Guattari discuss with respect to processes of territorialisation. The *nomos* is the vague expanse around the city, the pre-urban countryside, steppes or mountains – a special kind of distribution without division or shares (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 380). *Nomos* is set in distinction to *logos*, the urban form, *polis* or town, which organises the cultivation of the earth, striating pre-urban landscapes so that another opposition, between farmers and nomads, fleetingly emerges. These are asymmetrical movements, addling a desire to bring in simple oppositions, but it's never a question of striated cities and smooth steppes or seas, for the city can be smoothed and the steppes and sea striated. In noting, for instance, that it is the 'city that creates agriculture, without going through small towns' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 430), they articulate an approach that is by now widely accepted among urban pre-historians: there are no straight lines, neither in words nor in things, and many means of becoming-city. Emphasising the non-linear and reciprocal effects of specific *agencements*, generated through unforeseeable combinations, Deleuze and Guattari complicate notions of polarisation, centrality, order or progression through the lens of schizoanalysis.

The potential of schizoanalysis for assessing the contemporary city is explored by Marc Boumeester and Andrej Radman in 'The Impredicative City, or What Can a Boston Square Do?' Analysing the conceptual content of a photographic montage, they argue that any life-form, and specifically the *city*-life-form, is always a figuration in continuum in relation to action, perception and environment that cannot be captured by conventional architectural or geometrical models. Ignacio Farías and Stefan Höhne place emphasis on the liberatory potentials of city life in 'Humans as Vectors and Intensities: Becoming Urban in Berlin and New York City' with their discussion on how mass-transit passengers and tourists are inserted into the urban 'machinosphere'. For them, it entails a production of subjectivities that reconfigures one of the most long-standing promises of the city: that of becoming someone else. In a similar vein, Louise Beltzung Horvath and Markus Maicher examine the phenomenon of immersive urban online gaming in their contribution 'Rethinking the City as a Body without Organs', describing the players' alternations between realities that in the process endow mundane places and ordinary things with new significance. Related to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the *Body without Organs*, the authors argue that

the silent productions of affects and intensities within such commercial games generate both 'movements towards liberation from the organism, as well as new logics of capture' (p. 34).

Capitalist Flows and Political Confrontations

Capitalism holds a special place in the continuous heterogeneity that is the city, unsettling and advancing the role normally attributed to cities as sites for capitalist accumulation and modes of exploitation. Generating and constituting flows of desire, capitalism is a 'very special kind of delirium' (Deleuze and Guattari 2001) with uncertain limits and origins. Deleuze and Guattari assert that although the town anticipates capitalism it does not create it, and may even ward it off: instead it is the State-form 'that gives capitalism its models of realization'. But the relation to the town is a reciprocal one, and what is realised is 'an independent, worldwide axiomatic that is like a single City, megalopolis, or "megamachine" of which the States are parts, or neighborhoods' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 434–5).

Faced with a globalised, urbanised world embedded in capitalism, conventional lines of distinctions dissolve with the expansion of territorialising forces, even perhaps to the point of a 'planetary urbanization' (Merrifield 2013; Brenner 2014). This territorialisation is also an inverted movement, however, as shown by Catherine Malabou. Drawing on Deleuze, she points out the uncanny parallel between neoliberal capitalism and the organic constitution and neurological workings of the brain (Malabou 2008). Stressing our 'neuronal self' as a socio-historic construction, created through a continuous exchange between biological and socio-economic factors, confers on the urban environment the role as mediator for a cognitive and affective capitalism, a producer of subjectivities at the level of the non-conscious. In their contribution 'Laboratory Urbanism in Schladming', Magnus Eriksson and Karl Palmås reflect on how current forms of urban practices and spatial remodelling respond to such inner workings of capitalism. Adopting a small Austrian ski resort as their object of study, the authors explore the emergence of a 'laboratory urbanism' that focuses on both engineering and harnessing the creativity of pre-individual potentiality and affect.

This current emphasis on affect and space has a precursor in the loosely knit CERFI research group, in which both Guattari and Deleuze were engaged in the early 1970s, as outlined by Sven-Olov Wallenstein in 'Genealogy of Capital and the City: CERFI, Deleuze and Guattari'. CERFI staged an encounter between psychoanalysis, social movements

and political activism, leading to what Daniel Defert has called 'one of the most interesting log books from the ideological crossings of those times' (p. 117). Wallenstein's intellectual contextualisation of CERFI's work, particularly as regards the influential urban theories of Henri Lefebvre, suggest that the reconceptualisation of cities in terms of networks and modes of territorialisation – so pertinent for the thinking of Deleuze and Guattari – proceeds from this concrete setting. The central topic of the STATE-apparatus capture vis-à-vis the potential for a specifically urban democracy reappears in Mark Purcell's provocative contribution, 'Urban Democracy Beyond Deleuze and Guattari'. Although he finds the revolutionary potential of cities to be implicit in Deleuze and Guattari's thinking, Purcell argues that their outline is insufficient to give us a real grasp of the problem at hand and that we cannot do without Henri Lefebvre to decipher the real significance of an urban democracy. Conversely, Maria Hellström Reimer demonstrates how addressing cities in terms of flows and networks produced through processes of desire and capital in 'Cut-Make-and-Trim: Fast Fashion Urbanity in the Residues of Rana Plaza' carries profound political implications. In joining the dots between a 'sustainable' shopping mall in Sweden and the disastrous collapse of Rana Plaza – one of the largest sweatshops in Dhaka – Hellström Reimer critically interrogates Western urban consumerism and raises difficult questions about consequences, responsibilities and guilt.

Eruptions of Violence, Poverty and Hope

As we write, the Islamic State (IS) is threating the ancient city of Palmyra, apparently intent on the organised destruction of cultural artefacts that contribute to the histories and lives of cities old and new. The destruction of cultural monuments in an attempt to undermine the symbolic value vested in cities is not a new phenomenon and constitutes only one expression of 'urbicide'. Rather than targeting urban inhabitants one by one, the destruction of cities instead takes broad aim at the diffuse urban environment, in effect reducing the specific livelihood of urban inhabitants by degrading the habitability of their environmental milieu. These extreme forces of urban destruction, associated with warfare and terrorist attacks – whether targeting the symbolic values of architecture, the civic infrastructures of hospitals and marketplaces, the liveability of residential areas or bodies themselves – have their counterpart in the more insidious and daily expressions of urban violence. Through their propagation in populist media, the risk of natural disasters – whether

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