

Edges Events and Excess

Heidegger's view of the world was holistic. Heidegger argued that 'we' and the world do not exist apart: rather, we are intimately immersed within it and affected by it. He postulated, an '*un-dissolvable unity*' between ourselves and world. Heidegger called this "*Dasein*" (Heidegger, M. 1996) or being-in-the-world. The world can also be considered as a collection of diverse things as in Simmel's separation to distinguish. "*By disengaging two things from the undisturbed state of nature, in order to designate them 'separate', we have already related them to each other in our awareness*" (Simmel, G. 1994). Simmel's explanation recognises a whole and the differences within this whole which is useful as an explanation of our understanding of the perceptual landscape where comprehension is dependant on variation in the continuum to distinguish. We separate to comprehend forming a differentiation of things and establishing edges between them in order to recognise and classify. "*as my body is sensible sentient, seer and seen, its relations with the visible world fold and unfold in a double movement of divergence and overlap*". (Wylie, J. 2006)

Separating to distinguish develops edge conditions and edges do not only distinguish one thing from the other, they distinguish everything within our perceptual field developing complex interrelated and interpretive patterns. Edge conditions arise as transitions between 'this' and 'that'; they are changes of materials, mediums or fields yielding the edge of a forest or the edge of a shoreline. Edges also emerge as differentiations in 'this' or 'that' through topographic diversity or variations of intensity. Edge conditions can often be indistinct, interpretive or ineffable. The edge of a cloud is indistinct when close to or encapsulated within. The edge of a shoreline examined in detail is particularly indistinct and 'we' become less distinct from our context when considering the perpetual exchange of air and energy through our bodies. Edges are not absolute they are rather interpretive in that we actively separate in order to identify. We examine, dissect, distinguish and classify generating edges to establish distinctive things as separate entities. These edges do not, however, exist as entities in themselves rather we perceive an entities extent and our sensory systems are tuned to actively search for and accentuate variations as extents in order to distinguish. We are attuned to distinguish and recognise through sight, touch, taste, smell and sound variations that we interpret as edges consequently we have developed a repository of 'edge species' as pattern aids to the recognition of environmental phenomena.

The edge ends and intersects, it holds in and holds out, presenting an impedance to penetration that contains and excludes in a membranous resistance. This resistance creates a hiatus, a drawing out along the edge transition. The movement patterns local to the edge transition developing reflective optimal paths related to gain and necessity, as in the "*lex parsimoniae*" (Haggett, P. 1966) catalysing parallel adjacent routes, as the space of possible movement. Edges as limits therefore tend to co-exist with routes along their extents. These routes developing as promenades of anticipation associated with some form of change relative to their edge condition adjacency. Such routes can be considered as in-between zones, and in their edge coexistence become 'a priori places'. Indeed as Heidegger reminds us 'end' means place. "*The old meaning of the word 'end' means the same as place: from one end to the other, means from one place to the other*" (Heidegger, M. 1969). Processes tend to be encouraged along spatial edges and vice versa. Processes happen at particular edge locations forming events. Time and space are considered as inextricably linked as are the particularities of event and place, and they are distinctively reliant on edges as both defining extents and connective interfaces. Edges encourage processes through selection and overlapping in that they are both boundaries and meeting places. An edge is selectively permeable as an end and an intersection. The edge as end holds in or out encouraging overlapping and subsequent interaction. As intersection the edge catalyses interface and exchanges with other entities and spaces. Edges are thus both resistant and porous in a selective permeability that catalyses happenings and events. End is a destination, consequently a place, and edges as both end and intersection tend to develop as places of a transitory nature, interstitial a-priory gathering zones. Edges generate places and this points to the most important arena of action not being the centre but the edge or rather a multiplicity of

edges. *"All human action takes and makes place. The past is the set of places made by human action. History is a map of these places"* (Edington, P, J. 2007).

In the midst of any activity we are in-between edges and the living body moves by what Merleau Ponty termed *"corporeal intentionality"* (Merleau Ponty, M. 1962) that integrates body and environment in what Basso terms an *"inter-animation"* (Basso, K. 1996) The operative intentionality of objects and places elicits and responds to the bodies intentionality. There is a reciprocity of influence an intertwining and folding of lived body and objects. There is an interrelationship between ourselves and other entity edge phenomena in the perceptual landscape. This interrelationship is hinted at in Bachelard's use of Jean Pellerin's words *"The door scents me it hesitates"*.(Bachelard, G. 1969) A phrase which actively imbues the doors physicality with determination. There is an interaction with the object and self, affecting our behaviour. Piaget termed this interrelationship with our surrounding environment *'Schemata' 'whereby we assimilate (our actions upon objects) and accommodate (objects action upon us) the physicality of our surroundings'* (Piaget, J 1960) We incorporate physical objects into our behavioural patterns in a reciprocity of influence generating schemata as typological patterns of perception and reaction. This learnt behaviour develops autonomous patterns that create a buffer between ourselves and the world *'in effect holding the world at bay through these patterns'*.(Piaget, J. 1960) These schemata through their automated responses create an abstracted depth to the rhythms of everyday life keeping the multifarious complexities of the environment at bay. *'It is our body's capacity for structuring space (perception) that insures that the world keeps its distance'* (Bredlau,S,M. 2011).

"We cannot open our eyes to things without distancing ourselves from what we seek" (de Certeau, M. 1983). We abstract spatial depth structuring it such that it stands separate from us, developing a perceptual depth between ourselves and the environment despite being integral with it. *"When this depth disappears and the world is suddenly uncomfortably, encroaching on us, we can see our usual relation with the world for what it is; as privilege, not right--- the depth of our world is a mark of the worlds restraint rather than its indifference towards us"* (Bredlau,S, M. 2011). This is not to say there is a world of edges without volume and depth rather *"each thing we see which advances some of its visibility towards us can only be a thing if other sides of its visible thickness veer back into depth"* (Lingis, A. 1998). Depth and volume exist both as part of entities and of the mediums they are distributed within. We locate entities 'in this field' between the relative horizon and ourselves as percept horizon through *"density of texture, differential reflectance and motive parallax"* (Gibson, J, J. 1976). Our motive intentionality consumes spatial depth as an inter-animated unfolding experience of revelation and comprehension. This is as apparent in Le Corbusier's *promenades* (Samuel, F. 2010) as it is in Cullen's notion of *urban serial vision* (Cullen, G. 1961). However this is not so much a series of views as it is a spatiotemporal signature i.e. *"particular directed view sequences and not - particular views"* (Stone, J, V. 1999). Sequence matters the perceptual landscape is recognised through serial things and our consumption of space through a picturesque landscape or an urban 'derive' develops recognisable spatiotemporal patterns. Landscapes are however differentially consumed relative to direction, speed and mode of motion and we are an integral part of this landscape. Our skin is both end and bridge to the spatiotemporal landscape patterns we consume and that we reciprocally create spatiotemporal patterns through. There is an obvious reversibility where the sensing body is both subject and object. Merleau Ponty explained this reversibility through *'intertwining'* (Merleau Ponty, M 1968) Deleuze through *'folding'* (Deleuze, G. 1993). *"The "subject will come to a point of view upon this world and --- will be assembled precisely through the process of folding and intertwining"* (Wylie, J. 2006).

Deleuze postulates that our present only makes sense in terms of a future and a past consequently the present can be considered as a flow that includes past and projected future, the present becomes an extended animated field or as Husserl suggests a *"distended present as a just pastness and nearly newness"* (Husserl, E. 1964). Propention is our anticipation of the next moment an anticipation that we project and plan for through patterns and we are as much in anticipation of our futures as we are haunted by our past. As percept beings we possess integrated past and anticipated future trajectories in which everything is flowing as variable vectors and

velocities coalescing and conflicting as happenings and events. Everything is in effect becoming. Parr writes of this Deleuzian becoming as *"every event is but a unique instant of production in a continual flow of changes evident in the cosmos. The only thing shared by events is their having become different in the course of their production"* (Parr, A 2005).

An event can be an action, act or a happening, For Deleuze and Badiou event is probably best read as an 'exceptional event' from which a unique outcome emerges from the void or the in-between. For Deleuze events emerge from multiple multiplicities as an infinite series that is always becoming and infers an ontological flow. Events do however intensify bodies concentrating their multiplicity and emerging in a different nature constituting a new order of things as a unique development. Whitehead writes: *"Events are lived through, they extend around us. They are the medium within which our physical experience develops, or, rather, they are themselves the development of that experience"* (Whitehead, A. 1955). Badiou on the other hand adopts Zermelo-Fraenkel's set theory system whilst denying a set of all sets and emphasising the void as the originator of the unique. The void is not mere 'none being' rather it is the originator of everything unique. With these sets Badiou creates a method of thinking that is expansive and infinite that could transcend a structured situation ie to think outside the box (sets). For Badiou the event is not part of a continuity rather an event is a rupture. *"Badiou conceives of the event as an entirely unique, unprecedented, disruptive moment"* (Huber, S. 2012). Deleuze considers events as unique and innovative becoming's which are already present but unaccounted for Badiou however considers them as emerging from the void.

Mankind emerged event-ally from the void seventy thousand years ago. With the 'gift' of imagination we proliferated exterminating all threats we encountered in our spiralling territorial domination of the planet. Our success as excess derives from our ability to cooperate in large numbers to achieve complex tasks adaptively and creatively using axioms of accepted values and beliefs. We also possess the ability to co-operate with strangers through systems. It's our imagination that gives us this ability to co-operate in large groups with people we have never met. We create imagined realities together generating fictional realities and subsequently new realities. There is our objective reality and other layers of fictional realities as 'social narratives' such as 'money religion ethics' which act as shared beliefs enabling national and global co-operation. It's these fictional realities that have become more accentuated as our civilisation has become more integrated through communication, media and travel. We dominate as excess, and accrete in excessive condensations, at topographic confluences enabling and reflecting our social co-operation. The overlapping, selectivity and friction upon phenomena generated at confluences catalyses an intensification of events. These topographic edge - event conditions tending to develop into constellations of places as city. City constituting the extreme culmination of objects and subjects as our excreted excesses that have historically sprung from natural edges that 'embrace and enable' cultures. Embrace in terms of foci or naturally occurring phenomena of beauty and 'enable' as some form of intersection, exchange and security. *"The city.... Is the point of maximum concentration for the power and culture of a community"* (Munford, L. 1970).

City can be expressed in many ways, urban, conurbation, milieu, metropolis, megalopolis. In many ways city is an ontological microcosm it can be conceived as an ensemble or as a collection. City as ensemble (*Heidegger's Dasein*) constitutes our empirical experiential labyrinth that continually forms and amends our rational pyramids as mechanisms of reciprocally comprehending our experiences. City as collection (*Simmel's Separation*) can be categorised into generic functional sets. City patterns are to an extent developed from and interdependent with underlying natural patterns of landscape, consequently an abstract set of definitions developing Kevin Lynch's (Lynch, K. 1960) such as *routes, edges, fields, nodes and foci* relates to the overlapping integration of natural patterns and our own cultural patterns of landscape. *Fields* are sets of similar elements in some form of rhythmic distribution which is sometimes referred to as the grain of a particular area. *Foci* are some form of focus they stand out such as monuments or public buildings. *Nodes* are public spaces and or a disruption in the rhythm of the city. *Routes'* are the connective and communicative rhizomes linking fields, nodes and foci, it is however '*edges*' that

distinguish routes from fields nodes and foci. These patterns whilst distinguishable are interrelated 'sets' that describe the entire city.

Aldo Rossi has written that "*Architecture is the fixed stage for human events*" (Rossi, A. 1982). However whereas most Architecture is designed to exceed us it doesn't form a static stage rather the stage like ourselves is constantly becoming in terms of 'set' changing sets and even new stages. This concept of the city as continually becoming similar to our ontological experiences in an organic - inorganic folded 'fecund', has recently been referred to as assemblage theory. Assemblage theory references the French word 'agencement' referred to in *A Thousand Plateaus* by Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, it means arrangement, fitting or fixing. Assemblage involves a continuous process of emergence and becoming and is "*composed of a multiplicity of unstable organic and none organic elements each invested with the capacity to transform the whole*" (Macfarlane, C. 2009) Assemblage is conceived of as an open system of infinite potential. Kenney quotes Puar who advocates, via Deleuze and Guattari, "*a mode of thinking whereby identity categories are thought of as 'events, actions and encounters between bodies' rather than 'simply entities and attributes of the subject'*" (Kennedy R 2013). Thus, City is not just temporal it is where multiple temporalities collide and as such is the culmination of potential for both repetition and difference. It is poly-rhythmic, always becoming, fluxing and flowing related to an ephemeral pattern language, generating temporal forms through their convergence and condensation. City as landscape has open-ended possibilities, is incomplete, indeterminate and ambiguous. City is an interpenetration of edges and domains, a complex of variable, poly-rhythmic uses and serial privileged thresholds that influence events in a folded reciprocity. City as a polyrhythm of multiple temporalities constitutes an event-mental ensemble that is always becoming. The city is then as Bachelard noted "*the poetics of multiple durees coming together.*" (Kofman, E. 1995)

What characterises contemporary Cities, as microcosm's of postmodern society is the gross proliferation of objects, messages and signs that emerge. Baudrillard postulates that we live in new era of simulation and seduction in which reproduction replaces production. Information, communication and knowledge processing predominates in a hyper-reality of simulation as the proliferation of image, information, and models. Entertainment technologies have come to control thought and behaviour in a context of proximity and promiscuity of all things. The media spectacle proliferates and self references as an "*omnipresent screen of consciousness.... that becomes a carnival of mirrors*" (Keller, D. 2005-7). Baudrillard's vision of this simulation society anticipates it expanding and excreting ever more goods, services, information messages in a spiral of uncontrolled growth and replication.

Contemporary society is immersed within this excessive excretion of objects, messages, signs and models. Excess has of course long been a human characteristic; Aristotle considered abundance-bestowed freedom whilst Plato postulated a divine plenitude. Durkheim holds that "*human desire is an insatiable bottomless abyss a disease of the infinite*" (Durkheim, E. [1897] 1951). Excess can be an excess of singular things '*surfeit*' or an excess of too many varied things '*welter*'. Excess has variable influences on us with '*habituation*' for instance is a reduced reaction to its repeated stimuli. Excess can also cause '*overload paralysis*' where there is such an overload of alternatives it becomes impossible to select a mechanism of choice. Strategies for coping with excess are varied and exist on individual levels and social levels. '*Reduction*' strategies reduce excess, some simply ignore the excess (*defensive*) others simplify it to tractable terms (*reactive*) or redefine it out of existence through accepting it and amplifying it as a life style, or a virtue of it as with '*creative*' or '*adaptive*' strategies. Although excess is ubiquitous and landscape mutually shared value schemes lead us to desire similar things consequently our own social desirability regimes in many cases construct the scarcity that leads to conflict. Whilst excess in the market is inversely resolved by imposing some form of scarcity as a relative evaluation of sign and brand.

Managing contextual excess is complex and ever changing it involves 'role models' where social ranking and repetition tends to create superstar role model demand as in the 'Royals' or the more media savvy Kardashians. We also create stereotypes

individually and socially managing excess by developing sets of like things as a reduction tool to deal with the excess. Likewise we categorise as specialisation and self-similarity to create sets of social systems – a pluralism of society in which excess is managed as differences or a ‘separation to distinguish’. Adaptive strategies focus on finding excess desirable or at least less disturbing whilst serialism is the most obvious strategy for adapting to excess and we move through life in a sequence of jobs, friends, interests as serial adaption of narrative and self-discovery. This serial adaption can lead to an excess of selves multiple selves in each different context. There is an infinite excess of possible futures the skill is to retain an excess of possibilities and real wealth means not having to think about the multifarious availability as you can afford it all. Privilege tends towards time and quite as in not being swamped with objects messages and signs.

Within this simulated seductive reproductive landscape we have developed methods of structuring our reality into layers with hierarchical levels. There is our subconscious relationship with landscape as schemata, our distended present as haunted past and anticipated future and our hyper-reality as shared co-operative imaginations of mutually accepted values. This means we have different realities that are never quite segregated rather they intertwine and fold into each other interrelating informing and continually adapting to the complexities of our environment. These layers of ‘reality structuring’ deal with an information overload from an excessive fecund of stimuli, which constitute our environment. City is an ontological reflection of our activities it reflect our nature. The development of city form can be conceived of as a redistribution of the earth to reflect the patterns of its milieu programmatic activities and expectancies. In effect the city as a set of patterns reflects our needs and desires. We have an excess because excess is desirable. The cities multiple ‘dures’ generate an excess of desirable complexity and ambiguity and we as *“Humans prefer ambiguous, complex patterns in their visual field and that this seems a fundamental perceptual preference”* (Rapoport, A. 1967)

Complexity and ambiguity are desirable traits we consistently prefer variability and ambiguity in our environment. Munsinger and Kessen“ conducted a series of visual experiments in the 60s *“they were able to conclude that adults consistently prefer variability and uncertainty in their visual and auditory stimulation (although this preference ceases if pushed so far that the stimuli are chaotic)”*. (Rapoport, A. 1967). Kessen and Munsinger’s later work showed that through training and exposure sophisticated observer’s preferred greater complexity. Whilst Hebb postulated that *“the sustained interest of the perceiver with a stimulus field having some familiarity, yet some novelty”* (Hebb, D, O. 1949). Aldo Van Eyke talks about a gratifying sense of uncertainty and multi-phenomena and this is why the city is a desirable landscape and why we gravitate to cities in ever increasing numbers. City is continually emerging as a spatial and cultural maelstrom of complex and interpretive patterns forming a perceptually desirable landscape that embraces and enables its milieu to delve into its thickness.

City is edge-mental and event-mental reflecting an underlying structured edge condition system associated with our activities and expectancies as preferences of perception. These perceptual preferences appear however to be in a *aufhebung* (Hibben, J, G. 1902) state. We develop a perceptual distance between ourselves and the perceptual landscape, accommodating many of its patterns in schemata, whilst preferring complexity and ambiguity in the perceptual landscape? This ontological contradiction is also reflected in the social structuring of the city’s inhabitants. Nurses, policemen and sanitary workers help maintain a structured distance of the perceptual landscape by keeping sickness crime and rubbish at bay, whilst contradictorily artists, actors and designers venture to generate a complex and interpretive experiential landscape of cultural events. This excess as city landscape is a desirable creative destination, *“creative people seek out ambiguous situations and visual fields”* (Barron, F. 1963). and consequently creative tend to gravitate to city realms

Our technology accentuates simulation, insanity and reproduction enabling us to cooperate through increasing effective methods, intensities and numbers. In effect we have upgraded and our developing divinity can be related to Nietzsche’s ‘master morality’. We surpass religion becoming superior beings who can create our own

values, which is articulated as an intensive creative excess. *"Humans by nature gain pleasure from such things as expenditure, waste, festivals and sacrifice"*. (Keller, D. 2005-7). The question is what are our own values in a simulation and reproduction world where seduction has replaced production and there is an acceptance of the supremacy of the object over the subject, surrendering to their strategies and ruses. Baudrillard posits that *"in a society where everything is a commodity that can be bought and sold, alienation is total. Indeed, the term "alienation" originally signified "to sale," and in a totally commoditised society where everything is a commodity, alienation is ubiquitous and totalit is the very structure of market society"* (Keller, D. 2005-7). Western society has commoditised the entire planet and objects have become the new religion where we worship through mass signs and retail therapy is religious practice. *"Baudrillard posits 'the end of transcendence' where individuals can neither perceive their own true needs or another way of life"* (Keller, D. 2005-7).

In a commoditised hyper-productive landscape it becomes increasingly more difficult to conceptualise or operate outside the 'sets' of political media message, to actualise free thought? Culture as city is ubiquitous but has become indistinguishable from commodity. Baudrillard terms this trans-aesthetics in which domains lose their distinctive nature, values and judgement and taste dissipate and domains collapse in on each other. The cities edge-mental and event-mental characteristics maintain the potential to create unique culturally valued situations. Events have no verifiable content however they do change the current situation developing a discontinuity or cut continuity that intensifies context and brings into the open that which could not previously exist or be seen. The event gives itself in 'excess' as unique and unrepeatable. Creativity is event-mental it relies on the springing forth of the unique within an endeavour. This springing is reliant on the gap and the gift. The 'gap' is the nothingness from which the event, as the 'gift' erupts in excess. The gap is also an economy within any successful work that enables observers access and bridge to the meaning, gift of the work... its a form of ambiguity that Koestler terms 'infoling' (Koestler A. 1965) In Japan cut continuance as an artistic aim permeates all forms of art its termed (kire-tsuzuki 切れ続き)

Cultural creative acts need to re-establish their value through strategies that re-evaluate them in a commoditised landscape. Maurice Mauss discusses the gift as re-establishing value in a consumer society. The transaction of gifts transcends spiritual and material divisions. Those who give also give a part of themselves and this act creates a bond between the giver and receiver where the recipient is left with the obligation of reciprocation. The importance of the gift is in the generation of a bond is its de-alienation within a commoditised landscape. It re-establishes social values or un-alienates the object and its exchange by developing a debt obligation and reinforcing social bonds. Strategies for engaging society and re-establishing social bonds related to the city's cultural events re-establishes value within our society. Art works like Antony Gormley's fields engaged the community and the public his volunteer's reproductive sacrifice generating variety within similarity as a cultural excess of making that the wider community can appreciate. The works adopt a wider social narrative. Banksy gifts his popular satirical visions to the streets and he has through a sacrificial anonymity and prolific qualitative uniqueness become famous. Likewise shared city events such as the spider and the puppets create a street narrative that enhances the milieu's consciousness of city leaving a conscious debt from its shared gift.

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