

Der Raum der Stadt. Raumtheorien zwischen Architektur, Soziologie, Kunst und Philosophie in Japan und im Westen, hg. v. Jürgen Krusche in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Japanisch-Deutschen Zentrum Berlin; Marburg: Jonas Verlag 2008, 135 S., zahlr. Farb- und SW-Abb.; ISBN 978-3-89445-398-5; € 20,00

This slender volume goes back to an international conference on ‚the space of the city‘ respectively on ‚theories of space between architecture, sociology, art, and philosophy in Japan and the West‘, the subtitle of both the conference and the volume. The conference took place in the Japanisch-Deutschen Zentrum Berlin (JDZB) in October 2006 on the occasion of the conclusion of a research project entitled in English *city_space_transition* with the words separated by fashionable underscores. This project was run by the artist Jürgen Krusche, who also edited the volume, at the Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst in Zurich, Switzerland, from 2006.

Krusche writes in the introduction that in 2008 more than half of the world’s population will live in urbanized areas, that the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas once proclaimed $WORLD=CITY$, that disciplines other than architecture and urban planning like, for example, sociology and *Volkskunde* (ethnology), have also thoughts about cities, and that, apparently, the latter are analyzed often without giving room to questions of space, in short, that ‚no city exists without space, which can be expressed in a variation of Koolhaas’s formula as $CITY=SPACE$ ‘ (p. 9, all translations by the reviewer); to address this dense sequence of thoughts is one of the goals of the book. It is, however, only the first of many more. The contributions are, moreover, embedded into a discussion of changing ideas about space in the Western world, most notably the shift from space understood as a ‚three-dimensional container‘ to space as both a relative ‚structure with infinite dimensions‘ (p. 10) and a commodity. In addition, these newer Western ideas about space are contrasted with the Japanese understanding of space as captured by the term *ma* which embraces ‚periods of time, rhythm und intervals or atmospheres.‘ (p. 10). Finally, the book (and the research project) wishes to make a methodological contribution to what the editor calls *an Image-based Research* (p. 17, English in the original). Some of the essays took originally such non-written forms as, for example, urban installations, videos, and photography projects.

After the introductory essay, the first three papers are by the mathematician and philosopher Dieter Mersch, the sociologist Martina Löw, and the philosopher Kobayashi Nobuyuki. Together with an essay by Evelyn Schulz, professor of Japan studies, they are the strongest contributions in the volume. Mersch’s essay on the „Transformation des Raumes. Philosophische Aperçus zu mathematischen Raumkonzepten“ provides an overview of the historical development of rational, mathematically based concepts of space in Western European thought. These began with ancient Greek notions of *chora*, an expanse of emptiness, and *topos*, a marked point or location. The latter found expression in Euclidian geometry that focused on individual geometrical figures like, for example, squares, triangles, and the cycles of stars. The subsequent Cartesian model identified space with an infinite co-ordinate system

that eventually was challenged by non-Euclidian geometries. These, as Mersch points out, no longer generate ‚new images of space‘ („Raumvorstellungen“) but transform space into ‚an abstract mathematical entity ... that has no longer a correlate in the perception‘ (p. 25) of that space that is visible to every seeing human being. Space and spatiality have now morphed into a ‚syntax that resembles a formal language, that operates under rules without a referent in reality.‘ (p. 25)

Löw's paper concentrates on the sociological understanding of space, in particular issues arising from many (German) sociologists' fear of deterministic concepts that look for ‚causes of social issues in urban spaces rather than in social circumstances.‘ (p. 30). Löw emphasizes that for contemporary sociology space is ‚a relational category‘ (p. 34) that is continuously formed by the activities of living beings and their perception and use of objects in space. While no space can enforce a specific behaviour, an increasingly sophisticated knowledge about behaviour in space allows one to create distinct spatial atmospheres and settings that do influence social acts. That space is realized in daily activities but also structures the latter Löw calls the ‚duality of space‘ (p. 35) based upon which spatial structures should be elevated to the same level of importance for the larger societal make-up as political, economic and legal ones.

One example of such influential spatial structures is the topic of the paper by Evelyn Schulz. Her fascinating paper studies the importance of *roji*, small alleyways, adjacent to thoroughfares, that form the backbones of city quarters (*machi*) in historical Japanese cities. These spaces are semi-public or semi-private, they give access to private living quarters, and are used to mark the limits of private spaces with lines of flower pots, parked bicycle, brooms, small entrapments to perhaps dry some cloth, etc. Schulz portrays these spaces through the writings and images of Japanese authors. The latter recorded, described, and discussed these alleys from the late nineteenth century onwards in a deliberate contrast to modern Western architectural and urban planning ideas that were ‚adapted and varied‘ (p. 77) in Japan at about the same time.

Schulz's paper is preceded by Kobayashi Nobuyuki's essay on „Der „Ort“ (*basho*) und seine räumliche Artikulation in der japanischen Kultur am Beispiel der Gartenkunst“, the first contribution in the book that discusses specifically spatial concepts in Japan and compares them with Western ones, especially from ancient philosophy. Kobayashi points out that the Greek concept of *chora* bears some similarity to the Japanese *basho* or, to be more precise, the latter can perhaps be understood by drawing on some similarities to the former. Kobayashi's papers is a reflection on the writings of the philosopher Nishida Kitaro (1870–1945) who engaged with space as the location of realization („Erkenntnis“) and experience („Erfahrung“). The philosopher was drawn to the Platonic concept of *chora* because it was Plato's never further developed attempt to add to, if not to overcome, the dualism between the ideas and their continuous appearances („Erscheinungen“) in the material world. Decisive for the Japanese philosopher was that, in his understanding, *chora* as much as *basho* approached space not from the materiality of the objects within it, but from a radicalized understanding of

the ‚receptive moment‘ that resulted in a purely ‚perceptive‘ („anschauende“) attitude towards space. This essay is a fascinating meditation on space especially when Kobayashi ties his and Nishida’s thoughts to Japanese garden design.

It is noteworthy that Kobayashi writes about one early twentieth-century Japanese philosopher who was drawn to a specific concept of ancient Greek thought. Thus he, as much as Schulz in her essay, contextualizes in time and space the cross-cultural encounters traceable in the thought of this one philosopher, respectively in the differences between a Japanese type of street and European and US-American urban planning ideas.

In sharp contrast to this critical approach stands the intermediate essay „Über den urbanen Raum zur Konvergenz von Osten und Westen“ by the architect and urban planner Carl Fingerhuth. This paper makes sweeping statements about the limited and limiting, rational and one-dimensional thoughts about space of the West versus the infinite wisdom of the East, or more precise Chinese concepts of space as they have materialized time and again in China’s cities. Drawing on Martin Heidegger, C. G. Jung, and Jean Gebser, this paper generalizes assumptions about both the West – which apparently can primarily only destruct and revolutionize – and China – which seemingly is all about eternal continuity of history, space, and the experience of either. The author searches for explanatory patterns in the history of mankind and is fascinated by sudden shifts in human consciousness; both events on such large cosmological scales that, rather ironically, they require to be summarized in an orderly manner in rational diagrams and tables. With all respect for the author’s personal fascination with Chinese culture, his ahistorical approach to human cultures and their spaces nevertheless raises questions. For example, is the planning of a new city for circa 500,000 to 600,000 units of housing and jobs really an expression of the truth that ‚the city of the East has never given up on history and the continuity of space‘? (p. 69)

The remaining essays are case studies of architectural and artistic interventions respectively photographic and videoed observations in various cities, among them Zurich and Tokyo by Krusche, landscape architect Günther Vogt, ethnologist and video maker Angela Sanders, and architect Kojima Kazuhiro. With regard to the latter one wishes that the reader would have been told more about the spatial organization of the block of 36 streets in Hanoi, Vietnam, where plots are 80 meter deep but only 2.5 meters wide.

Various of the explicitly comparative essays point at a question that already the introduction has raised: Why to compare the *West* and Japan, respectively Zurich and Tokyo, with Berlin occasionally thrown in? The introduction gave a sketchy answer that stated that a ‚relationship was assumed between Western relative notions [of space] and the Japanese understanding of space‘ (p. 10). At the end of the book it becomes clear that this was less a hypothesis to be proven or not but more of a pre-conceived generalization about what space means in Asian cultures and what it should mean in Western ones. Especially those essays that engage with cross-cultural comparison (except Kobayashi’s) tend to present generally Western European cultures as a coherent, single-minded entity that was determined by a gradually unfold-

ing of a rational understanding of space. Barely any of these essays make reference to European traditions of non-rational or less-rational concepts of space, for example those rooted in the religions that have shaped Western Europe, most notably Judaism and Christianity, and of which Dante's „The Divine Comedy“ offers one possible account.

Instead, alternative traditions of space are found preferably in Japanese culture (or other Asian cultures) including allegedly timeless forms of religiosity that are now considered as a matter of fact. Two unquestioned assumptions show through repeatedly in various papers in this volume. First, that Asian ideas of space are what the West should have long ago adopted, if only the latter would not have strayed off into the realms of rational thought and related notions of space, a detour which the shift to non-Euclidian concepts of space has finally corrected in favour of the right path. Second, the surprisingly ahistorical presentation of Japanese culture, and Asian ones in general, as stable und enduring that seemingly have only changed in response to Western approaches or even colonization. In summary, this a rather uneven collection of essays that in the end does not adequately deal with the quite ambitious, if not to say confusingly many goals set out in the introduction.

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Gerhard Paul (Hg.): Das Jahrhundert der Bilder. 1949 bis heute; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2008; 794 S., 370 Farb- und 180 SW-Abb.; ISBN 978-3-89331-904-6; € 39,90

Für den Respekt vor der Kunstgeschichte im Kanon der Wissenschaften scheint derzeit zu gelten, was vor rund 50 Jahren mancher Laie vor moderner Kunst von sich behaupten zu können glaubte: *Das kann ich auch!* Und so werden bisweilen munter Bilder interpretiert, ohne die Methoden, das Instrumentarium und die Terminologie, die die Kunstgeschichtswissenschaft in 150 Jahren entwickelt hat, zu berücksichtigen. Dass ohne den Lotsen am Deck der Herausgeber dabei selbst der Tanker Geschichtswissenschaft in Havarie geraten kann, erweist derzeit eine von Gerhard Paul verantwortete Neuerscheinung.

Mit opulenten 794 Seiten (+ fünf Seiten Vorankündigung), geografischem Register und Personenregister, Sammelbibliographie, Autorenverzeichnis, rund 370 Farb- und 180 Schwarzweißabbildungen, fadengebunden und mit blauem Einmarkerband versehen, tritt das Buch optisch und haptisch mit dem Anspruch eines Standardwerks zum „Jahrhundert der Bilder – 1949 bis heute“ auf. Ein weiterer Band über die erste Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts ist für 2009 angekündigt.

Den Schutzumschlag des vorliegenden Bandes zieren auf dem Vorderdeckel Marilyn Monroe, deren Rock sich über dem Lüftungsschacht an der New Yorker Kreuzung Lexington Avenue/52nd Street aufbauscht, das Brandenburger Tor hinter der bevölkerten Mauer, das World Trade Center in New York kurz vor dem Aufprall