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Visualization of spatial organization: from art of memory to action?

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Keywords : visuals artifacts, spatial organization design, actors dynamics, regulating organizational construction.

Abstract:
Spatial settings are more and more present in organizational and management studies looking the interactions of space and organizations (Clegg, Kornberger, 2006). The study of workspaces organization, for example, has become a remarkable way to analyze organization modalities and practices (Van Marrewijk, Yanow, 2010). This study proposes to introduce the notion of projection by analyzing a viable link between spatial settings and visual dimension in organization (Meyer, al., 2013). By this approach, the paper will question the role of images during organization construction processes. Images – as places – are known to be the foundation of the art of memory (Yates, 1966), a way for the organization of thought (Quattrone, 2009). The idea is to interrogate the possibility for images to project action.

The paper's aim is to analyze the role of visual artifacts during spatial organization design. More specifically, we will focus on the uses of images (maps, models, drawings) in order to represent organizational actions during identity construction processes.

Research question:
How can visual artifacts be used as an instrument for the construction of an organizational identity during spatial design processes? An investigation through maps, models and drawings.

Methodology and case study:
The paper proposes to study the use of maps, models or drawings as "visual language" by the political discourse (Kress, Van Leeuwen, 1996) in order to give projections of the future organization of the Campus of Paris-Saclay in France. The French State's intention at Saclay is to group on the same territory several institutions in order to create a new university and to promote the scientific cooperation between some of the best French higher education institutions, public research and the economic world.

Based on Spicer and Tyler typology (2007), the paper takes a projected view of the territory (macro level). From a large focus based on « pre-existing » maps, models and drawings, we will use an *archeological approach* (Meyer and. al. 2013) to collect the data. The collection of these visuals artifacts allows to investigate and trace several points of view according to actors dynamics in situation of institutional change (Battilana, Leca, Boxenbaum, 2009).
As an example, the scientific project management at Saclay uses a map (Figure. 1), which represents the grouping on the same territory -through the use of logos- of all institutions involved in the project.

By contrast, the designers use models and drawings (Figure. 2 and 3) in order to project the future spatial organization, though architecture and urbanism.

Figure 1. Saclay territory map with institutions logos, 2009, FCS website.

Figure 2. Model of the Saclay territory project, XDGA website.

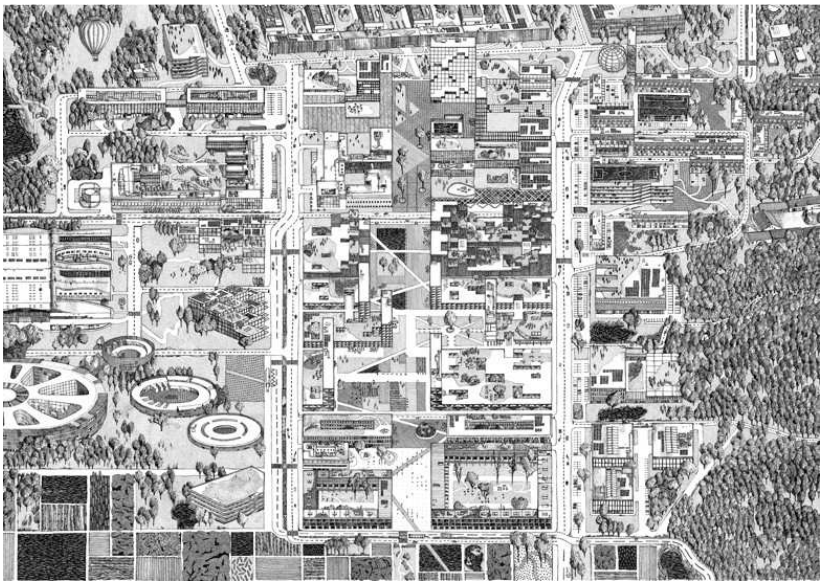

Figure 3. Vision of the future area of l'Ecole Polytechnique, Eva Le Roi, XDGA website.

Trough these examples, we observe that actors use visuals artifacts in order to project their future actions, to construct and crystallized their visions of the organization identity.
The use of visual artifacts also seems to transpose actors institutional logics (Lounsbury, Boxenbaum, 2013).

Conclusion and contribution:
Through this project of spatial organization, we understand that visual artifacts can be used from an actor point of view:

- To project actions;
- to construct and crystallized a vision.

Visual artifacts can also be used, from a researcher point of view, in order to understand actors dynamics.

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