

## **ORGANIZATIONAL ECOLOGIES**

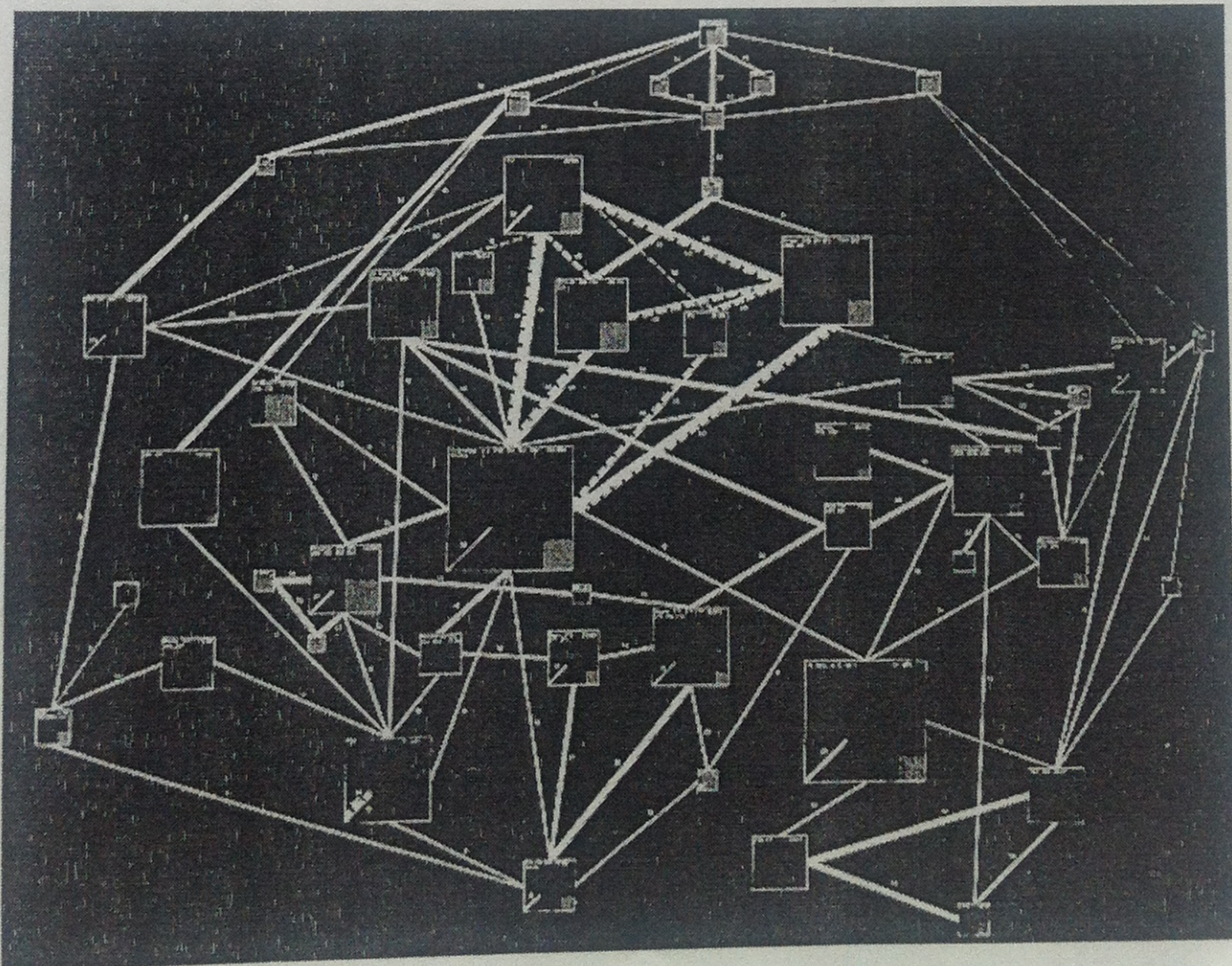
EMERGENT FORMS AND PRACTICES IN COMPLEX LANDSCAPES

James Corner

LARP 780-002 – Topics in Theory and Design Elective  
Fall, 2002  
W. 9-12 – 425 Van Pelt  
This course fulfills the LARP Theory III requirement

*"We were making sandcastles. Now we must swim in the sea that swept them away."*  
Rem Koolhaas

This research seminar introduces a series of critical texts and ideas on issues of complexity and alternative organizational structures. It draws from the expertise of ecologists, corporate managers, information specialists, media designers, planners and architects working in this area of research, and invites a number of significant figures to present their work. The aim is to produce not only a critical understanding of what is at stake when practicing in a world of constant change and uncertainty, but also to develop new vocabularies and techniques pertinent to more openly fluid forms and practices. Ecology is a key concept here because it describes complex, evolving systems, or "coherent / incongruent" organizational structures that have profound power and depth for new disciplinary practices, including landscape and urbanism. Guest lecturers include Stan Allen, Christine Boyer, Keller Easterling, Dilip daCunha, Manuel Delanda, Jeff Kipnis, Sanford Kwinter, Jesse Reiser and Bob Somol.





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Part of what is invoked by landscape, architectural and urban design are concerns for formal beauty and cultural meaning (representation), concerns that bring order and discipline to an otherwise unruly world. Spatial schemes of organization – gridded, axial, serial, layered, etc – have been historically valued for their intrinsic aesthetic effects and the cultural meanings they embody. Often overlooked and undervalued, however, are the organizational effects of such regimes – how invisible frameworks (diagrams, codes, regulations, representations, etc.) set-up spaces, distribute programs, and orchestrate the performance (and emergence) of life. Of particular interest here is the twofold nature of any project: on the one hand, the physical *form* of the project (its lay-out, materiality, geometry, and spatial organization) and, on the other, the *practices* that both generate and sustain the project (techniques of production, negotiation, management, representation, and construction). In either case, the world is clearly shifting toward forms and practices that are increasingly flexible, pliant, inventive, adaptive, and capable of responding quickly to changing circumstances. Ecology provides instruction in these various regards, less for its naturalistic and moralistic content but more because its concepts, vocabularies and ideas describe complex, dynamic systems, systems that do not have predictable or linear ends but that endlessly *evolve*, adapting, changing, emerging. Far from amorphous, chaotic structures, ecology shows how the complexity of emergent systems belongs to highly ordered series of organizations – both physical and regulatory.

New concepts for managing emergence in complex systems are not only valid in the design and planning arts but have already found their way into current business, management, information, and communication sectors, where a diverse range of operational frameworks have been devised to help develop organizational regimes that are adaptive. Indeed, it is now almost a commonplace in many sectors of both commerce and discourse to accept that while the complexity of today's world can no longer be controlled it can be guided, siphoned, harnessed, and steered. In landscape and urban terms, the questions circle around how we might make open-ended, or "coherent / incongruent" plans (without contradiction in terms), what might the character and "effects" of the "dynamic" or "emergent" plan be, and what techniques are available for practicing in newly adaptive ways. The aim is to produce not only a critical understanding of what is at stake when practicing in a world of constant change and uncertainty, but also to develop new vocabularies and techniques pertinent to more openly fluid forms and practices.



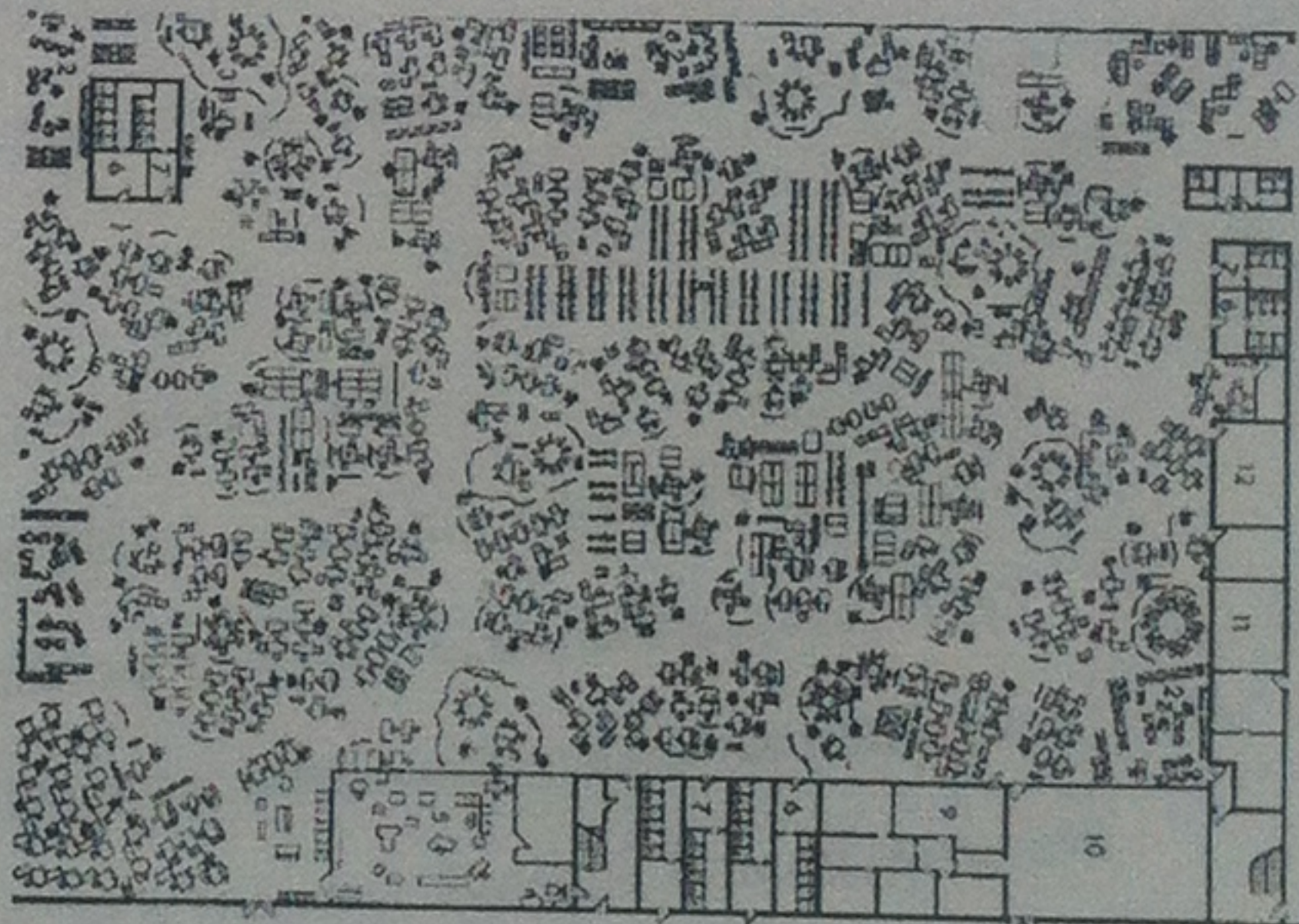
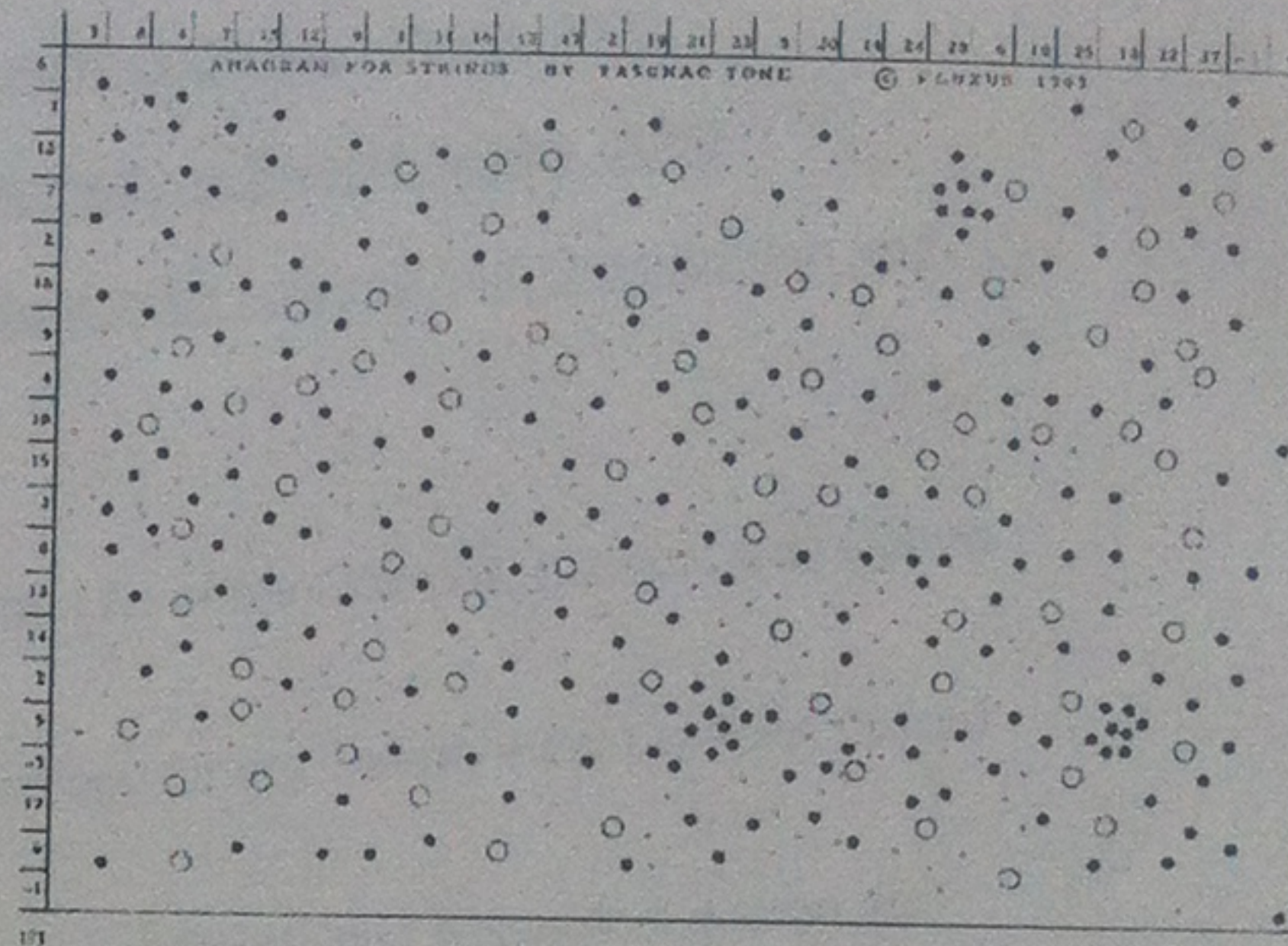
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### SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

- 9/11 INTRO: ORGANIZATION AND ECOLOGY  
JAMES CORNER
- 9/18 FLATBED URBANISM  
JAMES CORNER
- 9/25 TEXT / IMAGE CONSTRUCTIONS  
CHRISTINE BOYER
- 10/2 MAT BUILDING  
STAN ALLEN
- 10/9 +1/-1: EMERGENCE AND ENTROPY  
BOB SOMOL
- 10/16 NOMADIC ECOLOGIES  
DILIP DACUNHA
- 10/23 ORGANIZATIONAL ECOLOGY: A NEW SOCIAL ONTOLOGY?  
MANUEL DELANDA
- 10/30 OFFSHORE  
KELLER EASTERLING
- 11/6 USES, SITUATIONS AND CONDITIONS OF SPACE  
JESSE REISER
- 11/13 ANIMALITY: MILIEU AND TERRITORY  
SANFORD KWINTER
- 11/20 COMPLEXITY AFTER COLLAGE  
JEFF KIPNIS
- 11/27 NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING
- 12/4 LAST CLASS - PAPERS DUE  
JAMES CORNER
- 12/13 NO CLASS - GSFA REVIEW WEEK





## ORGANIZATIONAL ECOLOGIES

EMERGENT FORMS AND PRACTICES IN COMPLEX LANDSCAPES

### WEEKLY SEMINAR READINGS

9/11 INTRO: ORGANIZATION AND ECOLOGY  
JAMES CORNER

#### General Course References:

Mark C. Taylor, *The Moment of Complexity*, University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Manuel Delanda, *A Thousand Years of Non-Linear History*, Swerve Books, 2000

Stuart Kauffman, *At Home in the Universe: The Search for Laws of Self-Organization and Complexity*, Oxford University Press, 1995.

#### Secondary:

Lee Smolin, "An Ecology of Space and Time," *The Life of the Cosmos*, (Chaps. 6-9) Oxford University Press, 1997.

Daniel Botkin, *Discordant Harmonies: A New Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, Oxford University Press, 1991.

James Corner, "Ecology and Landscape as Agents of Creativity," *Ecological design and Planning*, George Thompson and Frederick Steiner, eds., Wiley, 1996: 80-108.

Richard Forman, *Land Mosaics: the Ecology of Landscapes and Regions*, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Robert Axelrod and Michael Cohen, *Harnessing Complexity: Organizational Implications of a Scientific Frontier*, Free Press/Simon and Schuster, 1999.

Kevin Kelly, "Out of Control: the new biology of machines, social systems, and the economic world," Addison-Wesley, 1994.

9/18 FLATBED URBANISM  
JAMES CORNER

— Lars Lerup, "Stim and Dross," *After the City*, MIT Press, 1998.

\* Philip Oswalt and Matthias Hollwich, "OMA at Work," *Archis*, July 1998 #7: 12-23.

Rem Koolhaas, "Whatever Happened to Urbanism?," *S,M,L,XL*, Monacelli Press, 1995

James Corner, "The Agency of Mapping," *Mappings*, Denis Cosgrove ed. Reaktion, 1999.

— Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "Rhizome," in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1987: 3-25.

\* Kevin Kelly, "Hive Mind" and "Nine Principles of God" in *Out of Control: the new biology of machines, social systems, and the economic world*, Addison-Wesley, 1994: 5-28, 468-472.

Michel Foucault, "Preface," *The Order of Things*, Vintage, 1970: xv-xxiv.

Alex Wall, "Programming the Urban Surface," *Recovering Landscape*, James Corner, ed., Princeton Architectural Press, 1999: 233-249.

Michael Speaks, "Its Out There: The Formal limits of the American Avant-Garde," *Architectural Design Profile 133: Hypersurface Architecture*, 1998: 26-31.



9/25 **TEXT / IMAGE CONSTRUCTIONS**  
CHRISTINE BOYER

Reading:

Rem Koolhaas, "Generic City," *SMLXL*, Monacelli Press, 1994: 1238-1264.

Le Corbusier, "Ville Contemporaine," *The City of Tomorrow and Its Planning*, MIT Press, 1986.

Yorgos Simeofordis "Notes for a Cultural History Between Uncertainty and the Contemporary Urban Condition", *Mutations*, Sanford Kwinter, ed., 2000: 414-425

Winy Maas, et-al., "Datascape" and "KWC FAR 12", in *FARMAX: Excursions on Density*, 010 Publishers, 1998: 99-103; 153-173.

10/2 **MAT BUILDING**  
STAN ALLEN

Reading:

Stan Allen, "Field Conditions", *Points and Lines*, Princeton Architectural Press, 1999.

Stan Allen, "Mat Building," *Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital and the Mat Building Revival*, Harshim Sarkis, ed., Prestel / CASE Series, 2001.

Gregory Bateson, "Form, Substance, Information," *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000 (1972): 454-471.

Recommended:

Stan Allen, "Recursive Urbanisms," unpublished ms.

Stan Allen, "Artificial Ecologies," *El Croquis 86: MVRDV*, 1999: 26-33.

10/9 **+1 / -1: EMERGENCE AND ENTROPY**  
BOB SOMOL

Reading:

Robert Somol, *Parc Downsview Park, Toronto*, Julia Czerniak, ed. 2001.

Rem Koolhaas, "Bigness," *SMLXL*, Monacelli Press.

Rem Koolhaas, "Junkspace," *Harvard Design Guide to Shopping, Taschen*, 2001: 402-407.

Robert Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments", *Robert Smithson Writings*, Nancy Holt, ed.

10/16 **NOMADIC ECOLOGIES**  
DILIP DACUNHA

Reading:

Henry David Thoreau, "Walking," *The Natural History Essays*, Peregrine Smith Books, 1980: 93-136.

*The Ecologist, Whose Common Future? Reclaiming the Commons*, New Society Pub., 1993: 172-197.

Anuradha Mathur, "Neither Wilderness nor Home: The Indian Maidan," *Recovering Landscape*, Princeton, 1999: 205-219.



10/23 **ORGANIZATIONAL ECOLOGY: A NEW SOCIAL ONTOLOGY?**  
MANUEL DELANDA

Reading:

Manuel Delanda, "A New Ontology for the Social Sciences," unpublished m.s., 2002.

Manuel Delanda, *A Thousand Years of Non-Linear History*, Swerve Books, 2000: 11-56; 257-274.

10/30 **OFFSHORE**  
KELLER EASTERLING

Reading:

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000: 42-66.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "Treatise on Nomadology-The War Machine" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, University of Minnesota, 1987: 351-424.

Keller Easterling, "Enduring Innocence" in *Grey Room Summer 2002 (After the World Trade Center)*, Routledge, 2002).

Recommended:

Keller Easterling, *Organizational Space*, MIT Press, 1999.

Paul Virilio, "Surfing the Accident," in *The Art of the Accident: Art, Architecture and Media Technology*, NIA Publ., 1998: 30-45.

11/6 **USES, SITUATIONS AND CONDITIONS OF SPACE**  
JESSE REISER

Reading:

Jesse Reiser, "Uses, Situations and Conditions of Space," *Werk, Bauen + Wohnen*, 05.2001: 69-71.

Jesse Reiser, "Material Computation," *Scroope II, Cambridge Architecture Journal*, 2001: 123-130.

11/13 **ANIMALITY, MILIEU AND TERRITORY**  
SANFORD KWINTER

Reading:

Sanford Kwinter, *Architectures of Time*, MIT Press, 2001: 3-101, 134-7, 167-182.

Sanford Kwinter, "Soft Systems," *Assemblage*.



11/20 COMPLEXITY AFTER COLLAGE  
JEFF KIPNIS

Reading:

Lee Smolin, "An Ecology of Space and Time," *The Life of the Cosmos*, (Chaps. 6-9) Oxford University Press, 1997.

Jane Jacobs, *The Nature of Economies*.

Jeff Kipnis, "Toward a New Architecture," in *Architectural Design Profile 102: Folding in Architecture*, Academy Group, 1993.

Recommended:

Stuart Kaufmann, "Emergence", *Investigations*.

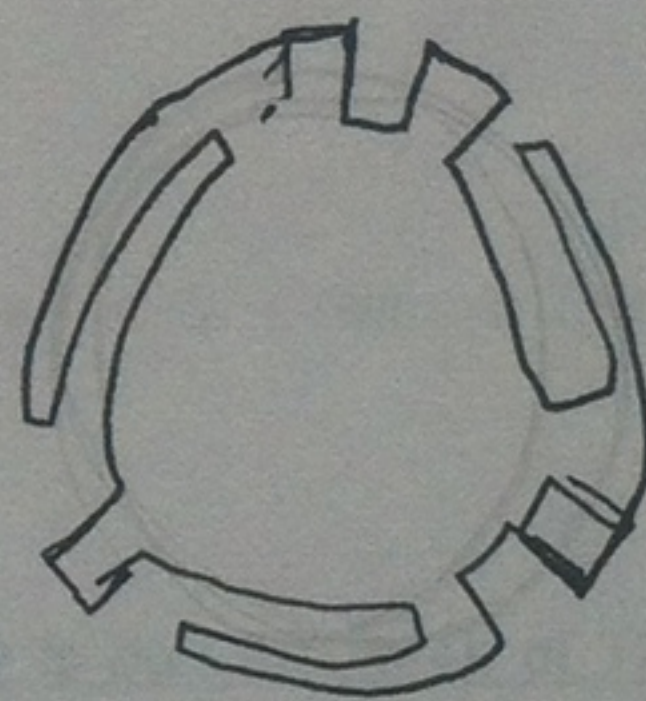
Jeff Kipnis, "On the Wild Side," unpublished lecture notes, 1999.

Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr von Leibniz, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, Oxford: Clarendon press, 1898 (read only the 98 or so statements, no commentary – ca: 8 pages).

11/27 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING – ESSAY OUTLINES DUE BY NOON

12/4 LAST CLASS – PAPERS DUE  
JAMES CORNER

12/11 NO CLASS - REVIEW WEEK





## REQUIREMENTS

Class attendance is expected at all classes.

Full attendance and active participation in discussion is worth 20% of the final grade.

In addition, a brief one-page (300 - 500 word) synopsis should be written following each class and completed for submission by the next, describing the content of the discussion and outlining key concepts/principles/references. These synopses should comprise three paragraphs: the first summarizing the content of the seminar, the second highlighting one or two aspects of particular interest to you, and the third a reflection, critique, or questioning of the issues outlined. These eleven pages are worth 50% of the final grade.

Additionally, a final short essay (1,200 - 2,000 words) summarizing some of the topics covered in class and situating these in a detailed case study of a contemporary project is worth 30% of the final grade, due 12/4.

Illustrate the conceptual development of your essay by referring to a particular case study – a built or unbuilt project that may go under the rubric “organizational ecologies”. Use diagrams and images to illustrate the project as needed. I am particularly interested in how the essay may serve as a means for you to draw several threads through numerous ideas, references, sources, etc. that have been discussed in the seminar as well as in your own inquiry or related work. Thus, the essay itself serves as a kind of organizing synthesis, a relational complex of related themes and ideas. Indeed, a map-diagram depicting the organizational structure and relational references / inferences of the essay might be an excellent opener.

Please cite all references and quotations as per the standard format:

For books:

Jackson, J.B., “The Word Itself,” in *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, Yale University Press, 1984:1-8.

For Journals:

Frampton, Kenneth, “Toward an Urban Landscape,” in *D: Columbia Documents*, vol. 4 (1995): 45-58.

A title and brief summary of your intended essay is due the week of Thanksgiving (W 11/27; the paper itself is due on the day of the last class 12/4.