

TITLE:

HIP HOP + ARCHITECTURE:
toward a reappropriation of human dwelling space in
response 2 the problem of the 21st century **global cosmopolis**

TEXTS CITED:

GLOBALIZATION, FLOWS, and IDENTITY: the NEW CHALLENGES of DESIGN; Manuel Castells
A THOUSAND PLATEAUS: CAPITALISM and SCHITZOPHRENIA; Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari
THE NEW CENTRALITY: the impact of TELEMATICS and GLOBALIZATION; Saskia Sassen
OF OTHER SPACES: UTOPIAS and HETEROUPTOPIAS; Michel Foucault
PROGRAMMING THE URBAN SURFACE; Alex Wall
LETTER to the PRESIDENT; Tupac Amaru Shakur
EVERYTHING is EVERYTHING; Lauren Hill
THE RIGHT TO THE CITY; Henri Lefebvre
GENERIC CITY; Rem Koolhaas
ICE AGE; Ras Kass

In the wake of liberating **social currents** flowing through late 1960's America, there was a subsequent and equally impassioned movement toward political and socio-economic regression by the wealthy, white, conservative, status quo. This ideology manifested itself as an assault on the social values and economic redistribution attempts of the 1970's. As the rhetoric behind Reaganomics in the 1980's, it was--as the current paranoid, right wing, panoptic, power structure continues to be--an entity that endeavors to vilify, criminalize and marginalize everything that our 'inner-city's tend to produce. This socio-economic assault necessitated an equally vigilant and ubiquitous urban artistic revolution to counteract its conspicuous destructivity. This cultural movement is now referred to as Hip-Hop and its constituents are the generation of children born and raised within the aforementioned urban economic violence and social repression.

"I philosophy/Possibly speak tongues/Beat drum, Abyssinian, street Baptist/Rap this in fine linen/from the beginning/My practice extending beyond the atlas/I begat this/Flippin' in the ghetto on a dirty mattress/You can't match this rapper (slash) actress/More powerful than two Cleopatra's/Bomb graffiti on the tomb of Nefertiti/MC's ain't ready to take it to the Serengeti/My rhymes is heavy like the mind of sister Betty (Shabazz—Malcolm X's wife)/L.Boogie spars with stars and constellations/Then came down for a little conversation/Adjacent to the king/fear no human being/Roll with cherubim's to Nassau Coliseum/Now hear this mixture/Where Hip-Hop meets scripture/develop a negative into a positive picture.

Now everything is everything/What is meant to be will be/After winter must come spring/change will come eventually..."

EVERYTHING is EVERYTHING

Lauryn Hill
1998

Today 'Hip-Hop kids' are adults and enter the contemporary global cosmopolitan milieu as, among other things, architects and designers. A closer look at the parallels between the phenomena of '**globalization**' and Hip-Hop Culture may reveal opportunities to cre8 a design language that rel8s in a unique way to the emerging conditions that accompany our new geo-political and socio-economic reality.

"Heavenly father, may I holla at you briefly—
I want to meet the President but will he meet me?
Is he scared to look into the eyes of a 'thug nigga'?
We're tired of being scapegoats for his capitalistic drug-dealin',
How hypocritical is liberty? That blind bitch ain't never did shit for me,
My history is full of caskets and scars, my own black nation at war—
My whole family 'behind bars'--and they wonder why we're scarred...

Dear Mr. Clinton/it's getting' harder and harder for a mothafucka to make a dollar in these here streets/I mean, I hear you screamin' peace—but we can't find peace until my lost little niggas on the streets get a piece/I know you feel me 'cause you're too near me not to hear me/so why don't you help a nigga out? /I'm sayin', you cut welfare and that's got us niggas on the street thinkin' "who in the hell cares?"/You want us to put down our Glocks (guns) and our Rocks (drugs) but y'all ain't ready to give us no mothafuckin' (any) dollars/what happened to our '40 acres and a mule' (1863 promise by United States government to repay all African ex-slaves and their descendents for hundreds of years of unpaid labor)—fool? /We ain't stupid, you think you got us all lookin' 2 loot/tryin' to turn all of us young niggas into troops (Operation Desert Storm)/you want us to fight your war--but who the fuck am I fightin' for?/I ain't got no love here—ain't had a (pay) check all year/Taxin' all the blacks and the police beatin' me in the streets (tupac's police brutality lawsuit in Oakland, Rodney King's ordeal in los angeles, et. al.)/
fuck peace!

LETTER to the PRESIDENT

Tupac Amaru Shakur
1996

Hip-Hop culture was born as a reaction to the tension created by economic shift in the already undervalued and underserved urban ghettos of New York City—almost instantaneously spreading its influence across America. Today, the influence of Hip-Hop culture permeates many global cosmopolises in Africa, Asia, South America, and Europe.

The **Four Elements** of Hip-Hop culture are artforms in flux—favoring innovation to repetition—emanating from the same source of dynamic, urban energy:

- 1.) **DJing/Turntablism** is aural stimulation and expression using record players and audio mixing equipment to create new beats and rhythms. Existing soul, disco, jazz, and rhythm and blues records are remade, spun backwards, 'scratched', 'looped' and mixed to create a completely new context or backdrop for the facilitation and reinforcement of other Hip-Hop elements (Rapping, Graffiti Writing, Break Dancing).
- 2.) **MCing/Rapping** is poetic, verbal/vocal expression of both individual and collective social, spiritual, and economic aspirations communicated in the form of urban oration/storytelling. It documents and/or resists the imposition of contemporary social (and often economic) conditions.
- 3.) **Graffiti Writing/Muralism** is a complex, socially coded, visual mode of social expression—marking territory, time, and/or passing along vital information among the initiated. It is a

temporal art form--understanding that it will eventually be 'reclaimed' by other forces and/or other artists—and subsumed into the 'collage in progress' that is urban life.

- 4.) **B-Boy'ing/Break-Dancing** is a high-energy, competitive, creative, stylistic form of physical expression--incorporating various spontaneous forms of bodily movement to create complex spatial relationships that give physical form to music--subsuming and uniting sonic energy with the individual receiving it.

"Globalization is a fashion, but it is more than a fashion. It is an ambiguous word that may lead to erroneous conclusions, but it also provides an entry point to discuss fundamental issues about the present moment of historical transition...globalization is the process by which human activity in its different dimensions becomes selectively and asymmetrically organized in interactive networks of permanence that function on a planetary scale in real-time...

Globalization affects not just the economy but also other dimensions—political, cultural, and symbolic...

Globalization is linked to two phenomena: the information technology revolution, and the major socio-economic restructuring that took place as a consequence of the economic and social crisis of the mid-1970s. These two processes emerged in constant interaction."

GLOBALIZATION, FLOWS, AND IDENTITY
Manuel Castells
1996

Globalization is, by nature, a contradictory pulsation of opposing energies--at once centralizing and dispersing—yet always cognizant of many centers. It is inclusive and selectively exclusionary—always strategic in its position. It is focused upon 'smart' technology but fueled by immigrants performing manual labor and providing the backbone for a secondary service-based economy that supports it.

Hip-Hop culture is similarly contradictory. It is simultaneously self-referential and continuously reflective of the conditions that spawned it. It is both '**everyday**' and '**other**' in its quest to express reality through the

lens of art. It is at once safe and dangerous, primal and complex, simplistic and specifically coded. It is at once laudatory and derogatory, misogynistic and female-reverent, destructive and creative, meditative and explosive. It is self-explanatory and inexplicable, reactionary and dialectic, underground (highly specialized) and mainstream (open to all), peripheral and centric, typological (classifying) and amalgamating (recombining), old (extant) and new (neoteric). Hip-Hop is phobic and fearless, traditional and radical, unapologetically tactless and unconditionally receptive. Yet as an expressive voice—it is always empowering and benevolent to the otherwise disenfranchised.

Hip Hop language is a transient semiotic excursion fusing Africa and Meso-America with pop culture, consumerism, urban America, current events, poetic verse, metaphor, simile, and sports jargon. Originally an African-American and Latino creation, Hip-Hop utilizes and influences the development of dialects like [Ebonics](#) and [Spanglish](#). The culture is empowered through words that, taken out of context and reinserted into 'standard English' or 'official Spanish', would be taken as vulgar and derogatory. Hip-Hop culture recycles words and reclaims them—never losing their original meaning but now, when utilized within a new paradigm, take on the possibility of expressing contradictory meanings. For example the words nigga, puto, bitch, pinche, mothafucka, shit, carrajo, cabron—depending upon the context that they are placed within—become harmless expressions and even laudatory titles of significance that can evolve new connotations in the future without ever losing their initial meaning. In this, and many other ways, these dialects transfigure the English and Spanish languages from semiotic symbols of colonial dominance, destruction, and anguish into heterotopic forms of empowerment.

Hip-Hop is an organic construct that emerged from the American condition—simultaneously resisting and welcoming the packaging and simplification that mainstream culture has placed upon it. It flourishes as

both an urban counterpart and urban byproduct of globaliz8ion in much the same way that the **Generic City** does.

"The Generic City breaks with this destructive cycle of dependency: it is nothing but a reflection of present need and present ability. It is the city without history. It is big enough for everybody. It is easy. It does not need maintenance. If it gets too small it just expands. If it gets old it just self-destructs and renews. It is equally exciting—or unexciting—everywhere. It is "superficial"—like a Hollywood studio lot, it can produce a new identity every Monday morning.

The Generic City is what is left after large sections of urban life crossed over to cyberspace...The Generic City is fractal, an endless repetition of the same simple structural module: it is possible to reconstruct it from its smallest entity, a desktop computer, maybe even a diskette...

The Generic City is seriously multiracial, on average 8% black, 12% white, 27% Hispanic, 37% Chinese/Asian, 6% indeterminate, 10% other. Not only multiracial, also multicultural...

The great originality of the Generic City is simply to abandon what doesn't work—what has outlived its use—to break up the blacktop of idealism with the jackhammers of realism and to accept whatever grows in its place. In that sense, the Generic City accommodates both the primordial and the futuristic—in fact, only these two. The Generic City is all that remains of what used to be the city. The Generic City is the post-city being prepared on the site of the ex-city...The writing of the city may be indecipherable, flawed, but that does not mean that there is no writing; it may simply be that we developed a new illiteracy, a new blindness...The best definition of the aesthetic of the Generic City is "free style"...There are three elements: roads, buildings, and nature; they coexist in flexible relationships, seemingly without reason, in spectacular organizational diversity...The surface of the city explodes, the economy accelerates, slows down, bursts, collapses...whole cities are built on colonial infrastructures of which the oppressors took the blueprints back home..."

GENERIC CITY
Rem Koolhaas
1998

Hip-Hop is a byproduct of the [global cosmopolis](#) in the same way that heat and light are byproducts of intense chemical reaction. Its four elements are composed of the eternal energy of humanity—repostulated against a backdrop of struggle and chaos--it seeks to reorder society. Hip hop Architecture is an

architecture of globalization--it seeks to reorder order and **rhyzomatically** redirect the trajectory of human imaginative possibility--by reclaiming and artistically reconceiving the space of human dwelling.

"I'm 1/3 black man, 1/3 Jackie Chan, and 1/3 sand---shifting across the surface of the land..."

ICE AGE
Ras Kass
1998

Hip-Hop culture is multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-talented, multifaceted—able to shift and recombine with fluidity to easily accommodate rapidly changing atmospheric and climactic conditions. It is able to reconfigure and strategically position itself in order to facilitate growth. Hip-Hop is ecologically 'smart'--it adapts to various, often extreme environments and sustains itself on discarded elements of society—like **the snail and the coffee grounds**—changing the fundamental nature of those elements, purifying and resynthesizing them, ultimately producing a product that is then resold to society for reconsumption. In this way, hip.hop allows society to 'eat twice' from the same food.

"It may be in, in fact, that our lives are still ruled by a certain number of unrelenting opposites, which institution and practice have not dared to erode. I refer here to opposites that we take for granted, such as the contrast between public and private space, family and social space, cultural and utilitarian space, the space of pleasure and the space of work—all opposites that are still actuated by a veiled sacredness..."

There also exist, and this is probably true for all cultures and all civilizations, real and effective spaces which are outlined in the very institution of society, but which constitute a sort of counterarrangement, of effectively realized utopia, in which all the real arrangement, all the other real arrangements that can be found within society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged, and overturned: a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable. In contrast to the utopias, these places which are absolutely other with respect to all the arrangements that they reflect and of which they speak might be described as heterotopias..."

OF OTHER SPACES
Michel Foucault
1967

Hip-Hop is about reclaiming and redefining space—it allows for spaces to be transformed by ‘adaptive reuse’ into heterotopias (e.g. the alley becomes a basketball court only when there is a ball and hoop [of any sort], a time interval between vehicular traffic [any length], a potential for competition [usually 3 or more people of similar ability], and usually music)—the space transforms itself without eliminating the possibility of the former usage by constantly respecting the significance of its other functions—understanding its current and future occupation as temporal. Hip-Hop seeks not to despoil but to coexist (as evidenced by the frequent voluntary game stoppages to allow cars to pass in a variable current). In the same way, the front stoop or street corner becomes an informal agora--where information and ideas are exchanged, social sub-structures are reinforced, strategic surveillance and conversation comes in the form of storytelling, signifying, elder reverence, acknowledgement, verbal and visual love or hate. And so the street becomes a football field, the basement becomes a dancehall/meditation space/smoking lounge/music studio/video game arcade/theater. The deteriorating blank walls in the neighborhood become local billboards/art galleries/informal posting boards/memorials. Hip-Hop never negates the history of a place, a song, a word, a landscape, or an idea--nor does it prohibit the continued usage of that entity as it was initially intended--but always explores ways to re-introduce it as a new thing AND an existing one. It agglomer8s and adds value when it borrows--never just a Venturian ‘duck’ or ‘decorated shed’--but maybe a duck that endeavors to actually swim or a shed that is now an inhabitable, mixed-use storehouse for a multiplicity of human and non-human artifacts.

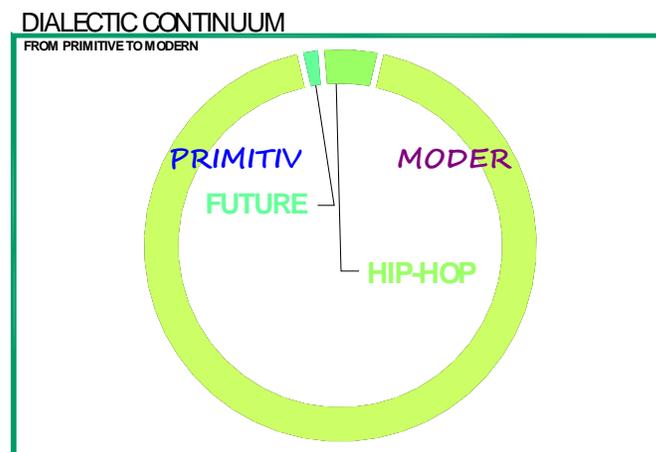
“...the term landscape no longer refers to prospects of pastoral innocence but rather invokes the functioning matrix of connective tissue that organizes not only objects and places but also the dynamic processes and events that move through them. This is landscape as active surface, structuring the new conditions for new relationships and interactions among the things it supports.

In describing landscape as urban surface, I do not mean to refer to simply the space between buildings, as in parking lots, planted areas, and residual spaces. Neither do I want to limit the use of the term landscape to wholly green, natural, or recreational spaces. Instead, I refer to the extensive and inclusive ground-plane of the city, to the "field" that accommodates buildings, roads, utilities, open spaces, neighborhoods, and natural habitats. This is the ground structure that organizes and supports a broad range of fixed and changing activities in the city. As such, the urban surface is dynamic and responsive; like a catalytic emulsion, the surface literally unfolds events in time."

PROGRAMMING the URBAN LANDSCAPE

Alex Wall
1999

Hip-Hop architecture redresses the notion of landscape—bending, folding, juxtaposing, synthesizing, mediating, blurring, and melding—planes, surfaces, and materials into a nebulous interpretation and exploration of necessity, desire, and possibility.



The future of Hip-Hop culture approaches the 'primitive' in the notion of evolution in a **dialectic continuum** because it essentially turns away from the pretension of the 'shi-shi fu-fu' towards the true nature of human interaction--probing 4 life in barren, industrial, experimental landscapes given up for dead like a reporter extending a microphone toward the unexpected survivors of a devastating socio-economic/cataclysmic incendiary explosion in an urban (**Mad Max**'esque) **Terrordome** and listening attentively to the impassioned verbal and artistic **Ebonic/Spanglish** fusion of radio-active isotopic elements. Hip-Hop extracts insight from the living, breathing, residue of the global cosmopolitan H-bomb—the explosive device

that neo-conservatism continues to drop on urban communities of color in true George (dub-yuh) Bush/post-traumatic 9-11 tragedy/Afghanistani-Iraqi/neo-scapegoat fashion, selectively overlooking the fact that American power brokers create and recycle both the rhetoric and conditions that agglomerate, escalate, and promote these types of explosions and the subsequent devastation left in their aftermath.

"...centrality remains a key property of our economic system, but (that) the spatial correlates of centrality have been profoundly altered by the new technologies and by globalization..."

...this (notion) entails reincorporating place and infrastructure in our conceptualization of the global information economy. And it involves an elaboration of the concept of electronic space...

In this bundle of transformations lies, possibly, a new set of questions for architecture...it seems to me that a focus on infrastructure in the new global information economy creates a conceptual and practical opening for architecture."

THE NEW CENTRALITY
Saskia Sassen
1996

Hip-Hop architecture is an architecture of **phenomenological transparencies** and complex contradictions—
-not post modern—but beyond modern. Hip Hop architecture is a response to contemporary apathy and hypocrisy. It is a heterotopic dietary supplement that makes digestive space for all forms of expression. As such, it reflects, refracts, and receives input from all 'flavas' that comprise the new global gumbo.

Hip-Hop is more than artistic expression 'sin fronteras' (without boundaries), it is anti-boundary, for boundaries need maintenance, vigilance and policing to maintain their present form in real-time. Hip-Hop says "fuck the police" (N.W.A. 1988) and **La Migra** tambien. Hip-Hop is anti-foreigner and anti-safe social distance—there is no concept of the so-called 'illegal alien' here. Hip-Hop says, '**mi hermanito, ponga los headphones, turn up the beat, pick up the microphone/paintbrush/spray can and muestranos que**

tienes'. Within Hip-Hop there is room for diverse input and dialogue--it has learned to reevaluate itself in the face of diverse interaction. There are no certificates, no degrees in 'Hip-Hop science'—only faith and training in the tradition of the Shaolin Monk. The only prerequisites for this training are a heartbeat that acknowledges the African drum as its rhythmic kindred, the courage to freely expose one's innermost passions and ideas, and the desire to explore real-life in real-time. In this respect, Hip-Hop is both tangible and virtual.

Hip-Hop is not **panoptic** or infiltratable, nor is it **criminalizable**, in fact, many of its aficionados are 'outlaws' and flourish on the fringe of society (e.g. prison is a heterotopia as is the transient, nomadic existence of the fugitive). Often, as in other revolutionary movements, that which is criminalized by 'authority' is 'romanticized' by the audience. Hip-Hop icons **Tupac** (Shakur) and **Biggie** (Christopher Wallace) were both 'repeat offenders' murdered in cold blood on our city streets. However, in physical death they have transcended the ephemeral plane of lyrical, poetic genius becoming martyrs in a transcendental jihad (holy war). And because violent, premature, death is an ever-present reality in the contemporary, urban '**Terrordome**', so-called criminals are seen in a field of relativity and evaluated individually. But is there a place in global society for frontier justice? Or is the notion that someone 'did what they had to do to survive' only an adequate defense against accusation and presupposition of guilt in the heterotopian confines of 'street court'?

Hip-Hop is anti-elite. Actually, the only way to get sequestered or exiled from it is by moving too far away from the reality of our collective condition and thus no longer being relevant--not 'keepin' it real' within whatever mode of reality one begins to construct for themselves. In this paradigm, **Modernism** is not Hip-Hop, and although 'deconstructive' by nature--**Deconstructivism** doesn't exist.

"In a period in which ideologues carry on about structures, the destructuring of the city is an indication of the depths of disintegration (both social and cultural). This society, taken as a whole, reveals itself lacking. There are holes, sometimes gaping voids between the subsystems and the structures that are consolidated by various products of chance. They are also sites of possibility. They contain elements that float freely or are dispersed without the strength to assemble them. What is more: the structuring activity and the power of the social vacuum tend to prohibit the actions or the simple presence of such a force. The instances of the possible can only be realized in the course of a radical metamorphosis."

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY
Henri Lefebvre
1967

Hip-Hop oscillates between polarities (black and white, rich and poor, religious and spiritual, essential and whimsical, critical and superficial) at high frequency and it nourishes and sustains itself on the tension created by their juxtaposition. In this way Hip-Hop creates an energy field—perceptible though unintelligible to the uninitiated—but legible, addictive and inseparable from the lives of those who are 'open' to its liberating essence.

"I see myself, simply, as a conduit for the interpolation of urban culture and expression—an interpreter, translating both the potential and kinetic energy of the city from art in its myriad form, in2 architecture.

Every day of my life I ingest the music, poetry, cinema, visual art, dance, fashion and extemporaneous 'street corner drama' that validates the urban experience.

This unsynchronized **cacophony** of stimulation is then filtered through my own unique **vision**—the passions, motivations, aspirations, successes and failures of my life experience that formul8 the cornea of my 'minds eye'—and thus I trans18..."

I SEE MYSELF
j a g a
2003

Hip-Hop is global, virtual (on the web) and real--unifying youth worldwide through music and art—like neo-jazz. Furthermore, I reiterate my prior assertion that the Hip-Hop generation has 'come of age' and stands on the horizon—poised and capable of deciphering, redirecting, redressing, and artistically expressing the new spaces that are to define the 21ST century [global cosmopolis](#) and the info-tech culture that gave rise to it.

Hip-Hop is, by nature, the final bastion of 'avant garde' potential. And although its peculiar products are quickly copied, mass-produced, and assimilated into the mainstream--the time required to package, distribute, and decipher their meaning allows their point of origin virtual space to evolve in substance and trajectory—regenerating its archetypal quality while sequestered in an urban laboratory—flourishing in relative seclusion. Thus the tension between old and new, exuberant and mundane, renewable and solitary, ephemeral and immutable sustains and renews Hip-Hop's essence. And like the **Generic City** within the global cosmopolis, it simply continues to grow, mutate, and reinvent itself, ad infinitum. In this sense it is both a heterotopia and a real place, both social wasteland and social refuge, and like **'the Matrix'**, both construct of imagination and construct of reality.

Hip-Hop is life, in fact, I'm listening to Hip-Hop music as I write—it guides my fingers across the keyboard and they nimbly keep time to the beat, my mind escapes into the unconfined, non-surveilled, heterotopic space created in the wake of every rhythmic pulsation and I am inspired. My spent energy is continuously replenished by ingesting the projected energy of [Pac](#), [L-boogie](#), [Big Boi](#), [Andre 3000](#), [Left Eye](#) and [Ras](#)—engaging in a Newtonian cycle of push and pull, suggestion and response, action and reaction.

"...the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible neither to

the One nor the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five, etc. It is not a multiple derived from the One, or to which One is added (n+1). It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows. It constitutes linear multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the One is always subtracted (n-1).

The rhizome is antigenealogy. It is a short-term memory, or antimemory. The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots. Unlike the graphic arts, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. It is tracings that must be put on the map, not the opposite. In contrast to centered (even polycentric) systems with hierarchical modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentered, organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states."

A THOUSAND PLATEAUS
Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari
1987

Hip-hop is a hybrid, **rhizomatic** in nature—bargain shopping—by subsuming certain rituals, customs, and conditions--altering them or '**building to suit**'--and then inhabiting, occupying, and exemplifying them. By contrast, it unapologetically acknowledges only scraps of some sensations, nothing of certain stimuli, and wholeheartedly assailing other contemporary phenomena. It is unpredictable and unstable and thus indomitable--no vaccine or pharmaceutical can be concocted to counteract its effect—like a renegade viral strain of Hepatitis C, its perpetual movement in divergent directions keeps it from being scientifically classified or analyzed long enough to produce a '**just say no**' '**antidrug**'.

Hip-Hop proudly occupies the margins and celebrates itself—**lib8ions** are ambidextrously poured from bottles of chilled champagne and 'tall cans' of refrigerated malt liquor.

jamesGARRETTjunior
01.14.05

Hip-Hop is my culture, my architecture, my celebration, my expression—and I proudly libate, both to proclaim its ascendance and to explore its possibility for fulfilling the egalitarian, multi-ethnic, multi-national, potential of the [global cosmopolis](#) of the 21st Century.

APPENDIX A

Impetus and History

Hip-Hop has no “inventors” because it is not patentable or even definite in a typological (classifiable) sense. There exist only “old school” artists who pushed the boundaries of possibility and imagination in its formative years—laying down the foundation for what it has become today.

So, in the genealogical tradition, Hip-Hop has no “progenitors” or creators because it re-creates itself everyday—via every artist that represents it. In fact, it only recognizes “ancestors” in the sense that so many have passionately contributed so much. And in the same way that we cannot always specifically name our Native American and African ancestors—we never question their indomitable spirit which runs through our culture, guiding our words and art. This sensibility consecrates ancestral existence while blurring their sacred names together into a field that we understand as collective memory.

Hip-Hop has no definitive beginning—just a place of origin (South Bronx)—and no end—as it has been incorporated into the essential framework of American youth culture and has been appropriated in the identity of youth culture worldwide.

Hip-Hop is more like an urban coral reef—a living, organic framework/habitat capable of supporting an incredible diversity of life.

Hip-Hop kids are here defined as:

- 1.) People who grew up in cities where/when Hip-Hop culture was still an experiment in artistic and socio-political expression.
- 2.) Those who were children in the 1970s and generally range in age from 25-35.

3 things generally recognized as essential to the **evolution of Hip-Hop culture**:

- 1.) **Rapper’s Delight** record released in 1979 by the Sugar Hill Gang—three teenage

M.C.s who rhymed over the 70's disco classic "Good Times". It raced up the popular music charts and landed Hip-Hop/Rap music in the living rooms and radio stations of mainstream America.

- 2.) **Beat Street**, a 1984 film that portrays early New York City Hip-Hop culture in the form of dance, music, and graf art (graffiti).

- 3.) **Str8 Outta Compton**, a 1988 record by NWA, in which was an explosive expression of rage against the status quo in American society. It featured the songs 'Fuck tha Police', and 'Gangsta Gangsta'—it was a first glimpse for many into the brutal reality of Southern California ghetto existence.

Hip-Hop is a feeling—a 'call and response' dialogue with the urban condition. Hip-Hop design is a logical trajectory for the physical translation of the 21st century global cosmopolis—into architecture.

APPENDIX B

FILM & FASHION: CREATIVE FODDER FOR HIP-HOP ARCHITECTURE

There is an on-going discourse in the design world about the relationship between film and architecture. I am of the opinion that there exists a wealth of areas of overlap-- fervid for exploration--to be mined for architectural fodder. And vice versa, within the current architectural milieu, exist many points of arrival/departure for makers of film to explore en route to cinematic nirvana. From the beginning and continuing into today, music and music video/film have been the critical media transmitters and communicators of Hip-Hop culture, language, and style. Hip-Hop artists were among the first to recognize the power of new mediums for expression and many of the earliest music videos featured rap/R&B musicians. Successful early forays into the sphere of music videos led to the evolution of a new generation of urban Black and Latino films and filmmakers. These cinematic explorations in the 1980's and 1990's began to unveil the vibrant energy and color that is Hip-Hop culture. Soon this phenomenon exploded into an entire genre of film (some of them blockbusters that initiated 'Hip-Hop kids' and the new audiences that followed them into the Hollywood mainstream) that documented this unique urban condition. Among these actors were: Tupac Shakur, Will Smith, Jada Pinkett-Smith, Queen Latifah (Dana Owens), LL Cool J (James Todd Smith), Lauren Velez, Jennifer Lopez, Rosie Perez, John Leguizamo, Ice Cube (O'shea Jackson), Ice T (Tracy Morrow), and Aaliyah Haughton. Filmmakers include Spike Lee, Matty Rich, John Singleton and the Hughes Brothers.

Film titles of this period included Wild Style (1982), Beat Street (1984), Breakin' (1984), Krush Groove (1985), Colors (1988), Do The Right Thing (1989), Boyz 'N The Hood (1991), Straight Out Of Brooklyn (1991), Deep Cover (1992), Juice (1992), Blood In Blood Out (1993), Menace 2 Society (1993), Poetic Justice (1993), I Like It Like That (1994), Jason's Lyric (1994), Higher Learning (1994), The Show (1995), Friday (1995), The Wood (1999), Black and White (1999), Baby Boy (2001).

Popular Television shows such as In Living Color, In the House, Moesha, and Living Single have also featured aspects Hip-Hop culture. There currently exists a substantial and growing body of work as well as a rich tradition of collaboration that makes Hip-Hop culture an interesting potential source of fodder for architectural exploration. Hip-Hop architecture is capable of conceiving a building and/or the building process as a series of sectional frames with elevation views composed of storyboard scenes.

Over the years, clothing and fashion, compressed into a singular entity, has similarly evolved into a major vehicle of Hip-Hop expression. In the early days, fashion manifested itself almost solely through attitude, or how one wore their 'fits'. Almost any outfit could be considered Hip-Hop if it was 'sported' (worn) properly. Plain, Levi's jeans, leather jackets, white tee-shirts, married to accessories like laceless athletic sneakers, gold chains and fashion frames (glasses) were considered 'avant garde' Hip-Hop fashion.

These days, the subject is much richer and more diverse, ranging from commercialized, high-end designer wear to handcrafted, lo-tech or retro, ethnic garb. It also encompasses vernacular, everyday clothing typically seen on the streets in 'working class' communities. Work clothes (custodial and janitorial pants and shirts, overalls, work boots, et. al.) military standard issue items (khakis and camouflage pants and jackets, etc.) and 'jail suits' (either denim or brightly colored one-piece, zip-ups often issued to inmates in county jails/state prisons' work detail/work furlough programs) have been 'updated', iconicized and subsequently assimilated into pop culture—via Hip-Hop. High-end retail stores have adopted the notion of an 'urban department' following the lead of music retailers.

Another key component in the field of Hip-Hop fashion is the emergence of young designers of color like Karl Kani, Willie Esco, Damani Dada, FUBU, PNB Nation, Phat Farm, RocaWear, Sean Jean and others who push the limits of expression through innovative clothing lines and exert increasing influence on the trajectory of the mainstream fashion industry. Hip-Hop architecture is also intrigued by and preoccupied with the material cladding of buildings for human habitation and architectural expression—in the same way that Hip-Hop fashion clothes the human body and provides an outlet for urban artistic expression.

APPENDIX C

ATUM: NEXUS of HIP-HOP ENERGY FIELD CONCEPT

The Universe is simultaneously expanding at its periphery and contracting at its core creating the effect of ATUM. This oscillation between edge and center--all and nothing creates a field of energy capable of sustaining a system of inter-related conditions. Within this milieu, it is possible for an object to approach both totality (oneness) and negligibility (nothingness). Hip-Hop also occupies this space of duality.

ATUM

KEMETIC (EGYPTIAN/ NUBIAN) PRICIPLE REPRESENTING THE UNIVERSAL DIVERGENCE

**CIRCULAR MODEL
OF EXPANDING
UNIVERSE**

EXAMPLE 1: A GRAIN OF SAND IN A TIME/SPACE VACUUM

A) BECOMES INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT WHEN ZOOMED IN UPON.

AND

B) BECOMES INFINTESSIMALLY SMALL WHEN ZOOMED OUT FROM.

CORE ← DIAMETER=AMPLITUDE OF WAVELENGTH → **PERIPHERY**

EXAMPLE 2: A DROP OF WATER IN THE OCEAN

A) BECOMES INCREASINGLY POWERFUL AS IT COALESCES INTO THE BODY OF WATER

AND

B) BECOMES INCREASINGLY INEFFECTUAL WHEN ISOLATED FROM THE OCEAN—
TO THE POINT OF EVENTUAL EVAPORATION AND DISSIPATION OF FORM.

APPENDIX D

POSITING the HIP-HOP CIPHA as a 21st CENTURY ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL

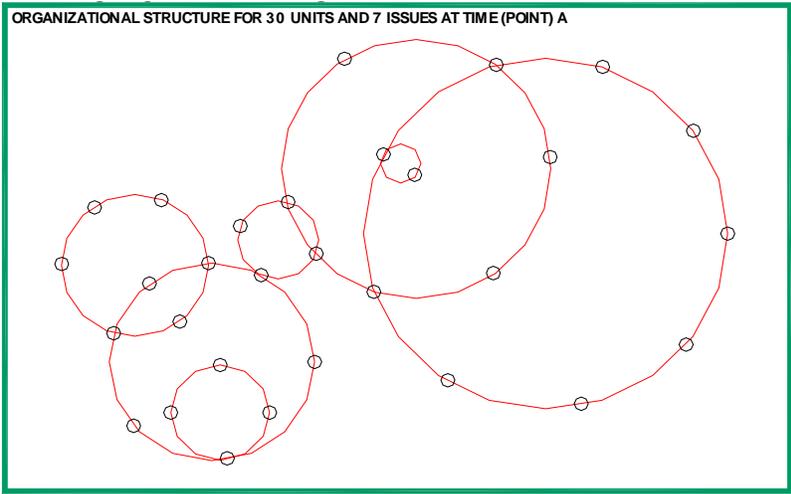
The Hip-Hop 'cipha' is a temporal, perpetually reconfigurable, circular system of interaction between members of a group. It is a construct, which allows for direct communication in the form of dialogue. Often a cipa involves 'freestyle' sessions, in which rappers, poets, or dancers informally gather forming a circular configuration. Within this spatial sphere, members surge and usurp—then regress and defer the 'floor' in a rhisomatic sequence of verbal/non-verbal dialogue. Members assume whatever position that is warranted by the situation and display their talent when they feel spiritually moved to enter the circle—rather than waiting within a specific order as is typical within a more structured linear method of organization. Within the cipa, a member may 'represent' their position numerous times, or may simply decide to watch/listen/learn. There is rarely a specific time limitation and people within the group flow in and out freely, the only rule is to respect whomever happens to be 'flowing'.

In this circle, diverse ability, knowledge, and insight can be passed along through example. Leadership is transient and flexible, and is passed along through the intrinsic energy specific to that moment in space-time. Therefore, within a group, there may be many diverse concurrent ciphas and or sub-groups responding in completely different ways to completely different stimuli.

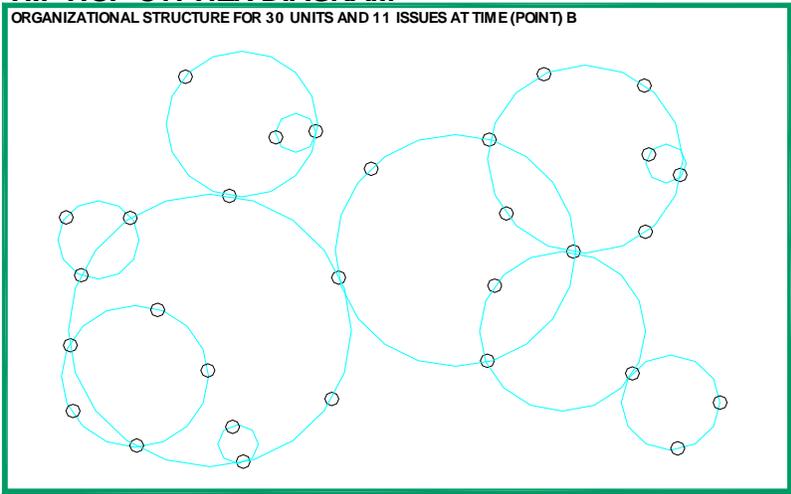
Over time, an individual is free to represent a position or multiple positions within multiple ciphas.

In the following diagrams, imagine that each small black bubble (30) represents an individual within a cipa (colored circle).

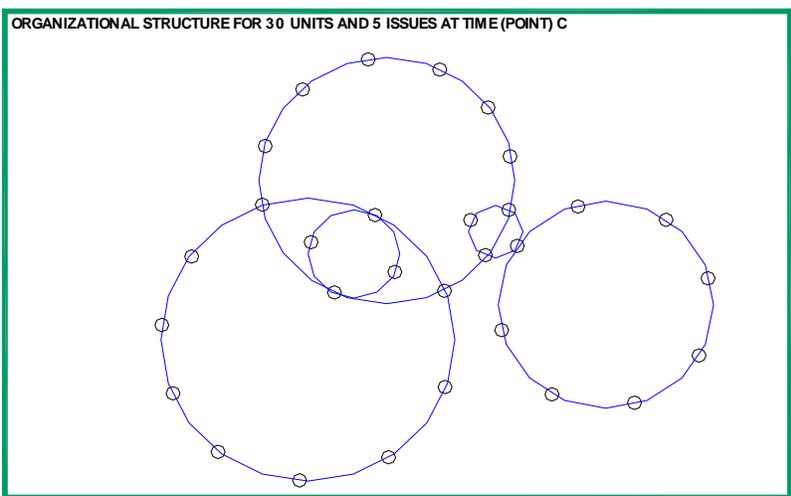
HIP.HOP CIPHA DIAGRAM



HIP.HOP CIPHA DIAGRAM



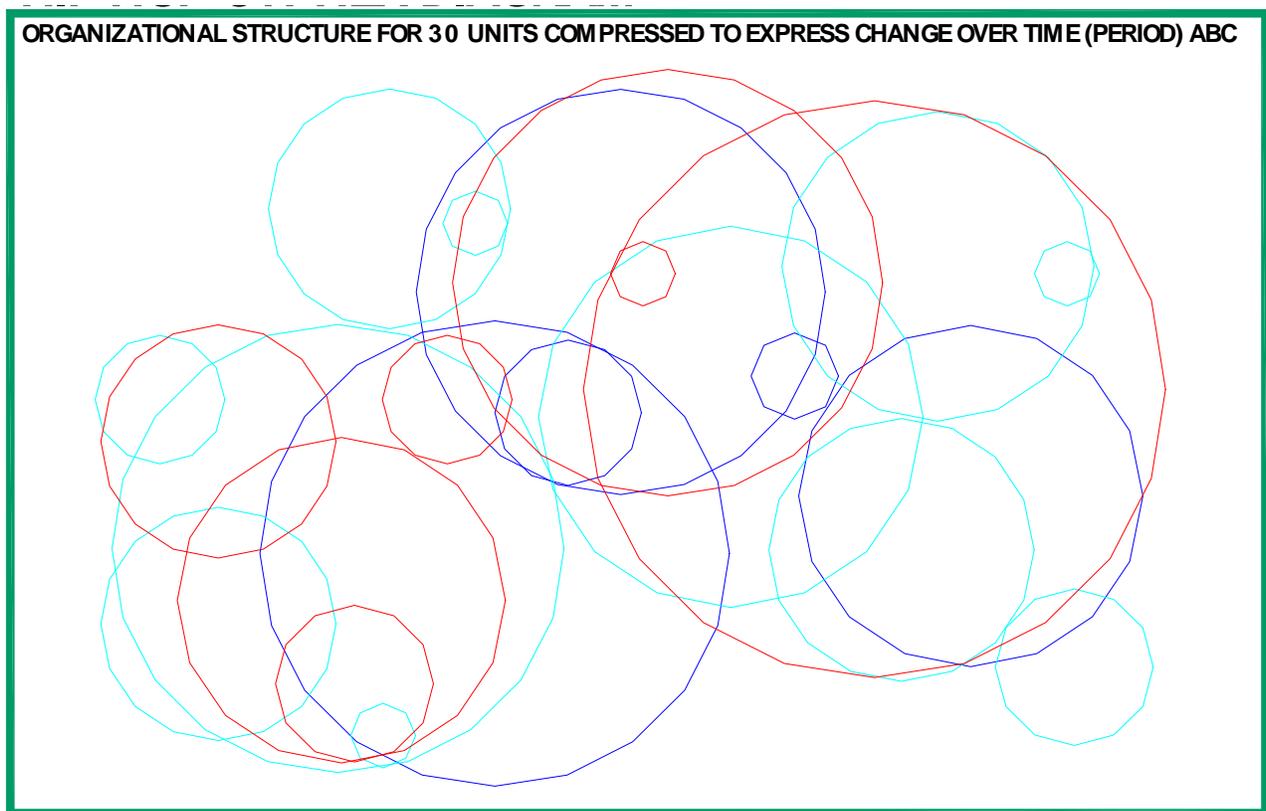
HIP.HOP CIPHA DIAGRAM



Applied to the concept of socio-political representation or 21st century problem solving scenarios, the cipa becomes a model capable of mediating the states of rapid transition and flux prevalent in the global info-tech culture. It allows for the simultaneous recognition and resolution of multiple and diverse dilemma. Each part is whole, and each whole capable of functioning as a part of a larger system.

The cipa facilitates the assimilation of flux in a way that cubicles and hierarchical models cannot.

HIP.HOP CIPHA



Imagine each colored cipa in the diagram as an emerging problem requiring attention. In this model, individuals who are well versed in diverse subjects and/or otherwise well suited to address multiple problems are free to do so—allowing the larger group maximum flexibility with respect strategic positioning.

It allows all members of the group to participate and exert leadership when the group is faced with issues requiring their specific skills sets or ideas. This is opposed to contemporary and traditional organizational models where one individual is designated to lead and is expected to represent the group in many diverse situations—often of which s/he has no direct

training or experience addressing. Within the cipa model, an individual may lead within a certain context as frequently or as sporadically as required by the specific energy of the moment. An individual is free to participate when they feel that they have something valuable to contribute—but is also free to simply listen/watch/learn without pressure or stigma.

A cipa has no 'leader' in the traditional sense, but rather leadership is adjudicated based upon the situation—and mutates rhisomatically when whomever is motivated or feels capable—steps up and assumes the role (eventually relinquishing that role with the next fluctuation within the energy flow).

All members of the group feel free to contribute to the dialogue, which infuses an increased level of ownership and evenly distributes it throughout the group regardless of education/talent/ability/economic level of the individual.

A group can thus be divided into as many cipas as required by the current state of crisis and may expand or contract based upon the relative stress of the situation. As opposed to contemporary and historic models that are fixed at a certain size regardless of the level of need, subdivided into pre-determined sub-groups and members appointed into inflexible, types/positions/titles. The whole notion of 'appointment' and 'responsibility' are challenged in the cipa model as individuals are free to flow into roles that they are comfortable with, understanding that their role may change whenever the circumstances dictate. Responsibility is based upon the groups' common interest and/or survival rather than the strict 'accountability' and layers of 'checks and balances'. The group is now self-referential and thus checks itself, and as a circular structure, essentially balances itself.

Communication lines within the cipa are, by nature, always open. The group always defers to 'one' to communicate to 'all', but the 'one' is, by design, constantly changing and thus deferring to other members of the group. Thus, the 'one' is always ultimately subsumed by 'all'.

The group is united by a combination of self-interest, common group goals (e.g. quality of life, growth and evolution) and group survival. It is effective in much the same way that the 'leave a penny if you can spare a penny/take a penny if you need a penny' dish at the local convenience store is never empty (although one is certainly free to empty it out if s/he wished to). It

doesn't really exist, and in a heterotopian sense, it only becomes relevant if you 'have' or 'need'—thus, it isn't really 'abusable'. 'Checking and balancing' this system is a combination of respect for the possibility of one's potential future need, and an effective form of peer pressure akin to the act of taking more than one treat offered at a social gathering when it is known that others are watching and waiting—potentially missing out on the offering because of someone's overt greed. Thus, the notion of individual responsibility within the cipa model need not be prescribed, policed, or dictated to be effective.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD: A SOCIO-POLITICAL ENTITY WITHIN THE CIPA MODEL

Imagine a neighborhood consisting of 30 families of various ethnicity, economic level, educational background, etc.

Assume that each neighborhood owns and operates a small but technologically sophisticated community center (with recreational and daycare facilities) which acts as a regular meeting place for weekly or monthly group gatherings.

Imagine that a sizable amount of public tax money was invested in the community center and the neighborhood association.

Assume that residents on the official census list for a particular community could register for comprehensive family healthcare and childcare in exchange for their participation in the regular community association meetings. Incentive and remuneration for precious time and energy would then exist to support community activism. An individual could choose to abstain if they were not really interested in the group and/or desired to provide a different healthcare/childcare provision for their family. On the other hand, healthcare/childcare provision would be offered to all participant families regardless of ethnicity, social status, educational level, etc.

Families could send the same or a different representative on each occasion or could send multiple representatives as long as at least one is present. The option of teleconferencing would be available to vacationing or travelling families--increasing the flexibility of the system for real-life within the reality of our 21st century global info-tech society.

Ciphas could emerge to fight neighborhood crime, support local economic ventures, combat 'terrorism', and as informational/educational hubs of communication. Communities could also choose to link together (locally or globally) via the Internet to increase business, cultural, educational opportunities, domestically or abroad.

If one moved into a new neighborhood s/he would simply register their family with the new community association and continue to access the same benefits as they did with their prior community. In this way neighbors would get to know one another on a social, intellectual, and political level--reinforcing the bonds that make neighborhoods strong and safe.

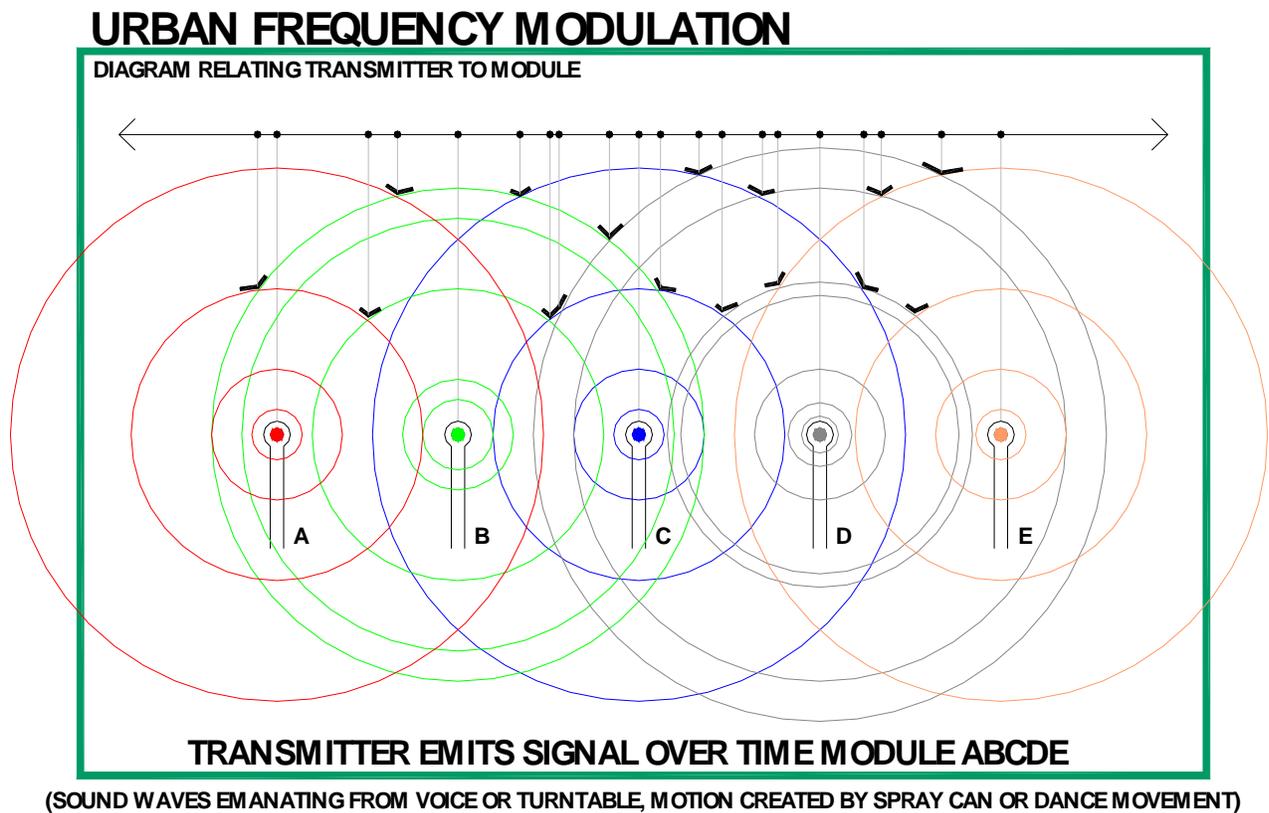
Within this community association situation, money could be held in trust and appropriated by the group to compensate family financial losses from fire, accident, theft, and/or personal tragedy without the need for insurance agencies and using positive peer pressure to deter fraudulent claims. The guiding premise is that if being a member of a strong group strengthens the individual, then that individual is less likely to take action to weaken the group--which is an extension of him/herself. This would also risk jeopardizing solid relationships forged over time through the problem solving process. Claims would not be made against the group, nor would they be investigated—simply discussed and money dispersed—the system would work like a huge community 'penny dish' funded by a reasonable, flat percentage based, evenly applicable tax system. Exclusion from the group benefits may be a penalty of 'tax evasion' within such a system.

APPENDIX E

TECHNOLOGY & HIP-HOP: HYBRID DESIGN PARDIGM

Technology has been an ever-present companion in the development and communication of Hip-Hop culture. 'Hip-Hop kids' have always been ahead of the technology curve—although only recently the 'target market' of advertising campaigns. They were the first mass audience (albeit 'underground') to incorporate numeric pagers, cell phones, two-way pagers, video games, and various electronic gadgets—as they were developed—into the fabric of urban youth culture. 'Hip-Hop kids' were also the first urban people of color to colonize the Internet and maintain a constant web presence with latent political, social and educational empowerment opportunities. Hip-Hop architecture is similarly technology oriented, searching for and incorporating new materials/methods of construction, and new uses for existing materials into architectural design. Energy efficiency, sustainability though 'loaded' expressions in contemporary design discourse—are acknowledged by Hip-Hop architecture as essential issues at the core of any solution 2 the problem of the 21st century [global cosmopolis](#).

VISUALIZING HIP-HOP ENERGY: URBAN FREQUENCY MODULATION



URBAN FREQUENCY MODULATION:

The act of interpreting the rhythm/pulse/beat of the urban condition and modulating or representing it as a form/unit/module to be communicated as a 'building block' of space-time—via architecture.

APPENDIX F

THE PROBLEM OF THE 21ST CENTURY GLOBAL COSMOPOLIS

The problem of the 21st century is **sustainability**—it will manifest itself in the form of redistribution of resources to coerce a more egalitarian quality of life for all people.

EDUCATIONAL: Redistribution of information--the first step toward global empowerment...improved access to the storehouse of accumulated human information called the world-wide-web has the potential to move us swiftly toward this end.

ECONOMIC: Redistribution of wealth--the gap between wealthy and impoverished nations must be closed...the acceptance of human desperation causes horrific human consequences in the form of ISMs—fanaticism, racism, terrorism, etc...there must be basic rights to food, shelter, clean air and water for ALL human beings who share this single planet—regardless of race, religion, ethnicity...all children must have an equal opportunity to grow and contribute to humanity...unimaginable catastrophic problems will arise in the future and test our imminent survival—and whether humankind will continue to exist may ultimately depend upon this fundamental premise.

ENVIRONMENTAL: Redistribution of resources and changes in consumption patterns—consumption must be both reduced and made proportionate to population and land size...sustainable development and urbanization patterns must be developed, implemented and enforced to maximize resources...the global community must move swiftly toward a renewable energy imperative...fossil fuels are running being exhausted and the addiction to them will cause widespread war, conquest and geopolitical upheaval...fossil fuels are also causing irreversible damage to ecosystems, atmospheric, and hydraulic cycles.

GEO-POLITICAL: Redistribution of power, and strong, central, respected community of nations that recognizes the interrelatedness of this era...where physical resources are limited and depleting, and pollution, poisons and disease (waterborne, airborne) spread uncontrollably across imaginary geo-political borders threatening every1.

OUR COLLECTIVE URBAN CONDITION

Let us now consider the notion of the physical production/construction of our cities.

Economic 'viability' (short-term) can no longer be permitted to govern our urban Real Estate Development policy and practice. Long-term considerations and affects to our actions must be given equal weight/play and factored in as we move forward and evolve. The monolithic, single-use, single-function, disposable building type--like the urban hi-rise model of public housing, detached-suburban-single-family-house sub-development, 'big box' stores, 'strip malls', and stand-alone suburban shopping malls set back from the street and surrounded by acres of bituminous surface parking—must be reconceived and replaced because:

- 1.) their existence disrupts any potentiality of urban continuity, and
- 2.) their 'ecological footprints' (see recent work of Michael Sorkin @ C.U.N.Y.) and environmental obliviousness far exceeds their capacity to serve society in their intended manner.

These typologies have short 'shelf lives'—their owners often quickly move on to 'newer/better' investment endeavors--leaving abandoned tracts of shoddily constructed, undesirable and non-reusable edifices that 'turn their backs' in intolerant disrespect of the notions of city, community, street, neighborhood, and most importantly, people. These new landscapes are destined for desertion and are never 'architecturally' or culturally significant enough to warrant their renovation or preservation. Nor does it make economic sense to those who will look to build in this fashion as our persistent government subsidization of this type of disposable approach to urbanity and landscape has made it 'just as cheap' to find and similarly defile another adjacent 'greenfield' site or 'expendable' inner-city block by leveling, paving, and building the next monstrosity--rather than attempt to reoccupy myriad, rapidly aging/deteriorating/atrophying abandoned sites.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMENTARIES: through the lens of hip.hop

As we continue to pave over green, we physically alter the hydrology of microclimates, induce the depletion of local aquifers and regional water-tables as football field-sized roofs, roads, and surface parking lots drain directly into storm sewers and rivers--running away from their naturally restorative course and carry toxic residue from internal combustion engine vehicles and petroleum from bituminous (blacktop) surfaces. This agglomeration of rainwater and toxic impurities often exceeds that which our rivers and their tributaries can carry—inducing '50-year' floods in the midwestern United States every 10 years and causing increasingly expensive property damage, increased federally backed 'disaster insurance relief' claims, and most significantly eschewing long-term environmental degradation.

And all of the aforementioned problems are to what end? So that Wal-Mart, Kmart, and Target employees who live in our inner-city communities can continue to maintain negligible/non-'living wage' paychecks while corporate executives make millions and move their families farther and farther out into suburbia until 'mismanagement', scandal and greed induce bankruptcy causing low-level labor lay-offs--paying million dollar executive 'severance packages', and ultimately abandoning more behemoth buildings on burgeoning wasteland--simultaneously eating away @ the city's very fabric from within (inner-city) and without (peripheral inner-ring suburban fringe)--never dotting our landscape as environmentally antagonistic artifacts that will echo memories of how we destroyed ourselves when assessed by future generations forced to inherit our bullshit.

By contrast, however, there are a significant number of extant urban structures that persist—even though their original function or purpose has changed significantly many times over the years. These buildings succeed because:

ARCHITECTURAL COMMENTARIES: through the lens of hip.hop

- 1.) They respect the sidewalk giving primacy to the individual human @ street level and were generally built in older cities b4 the 1920s when the automobile began its rise to preeminence--dominating building codes and zoning laws such that any reading of urban form since then (from macro to micro) reflects our fascination with and ultimate dependence upon the (usually) single-trip, single-user, individual automobile.
- 2.) They respect the notion of mass transit and thoroughfare—developing in areas which are accessible by urban masses whether walking or driving.
- 3.) They were built with generous interior volumetric spaces and can be re-inhabited in myriad ways when their original intended purposes obsolesce.
- 4.) They are built from substantial, 'time-resistant' materials like masonry, iron, and heavy timber without the 'bottom-line' oriented 'value engineering' that often sabotages the building process and pervades our modern built environment—exhibiting physical evidence of quality craftsmanship in their making which will allow continued service and economic viability long in2 the future when their short-sighted, shoddily built contemporaries exist only as lifeless, abandoned relics---traces of a prior human habit8ion.
- 5.) These buildings in their long-term 'usefulness' provide a tremendous asset to the city, bolstering the quality of its core building stock—providing breathing room to expanding small businesses, creative housing options and live-work spaces to urban artists and entrepreneurs.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMENTARIES: through the lens of hip.hop

We need more of these a4mentioned buildings in our cities—not that our new buildings should visually resemble those quality structures that have been passed down 2 us—but that their scale should respect both the human and the street and their construction taken seriously enough 2 anticip8 long-term functionality which justifies and more sustainably distributes their ecological footprints over time.

2 use a baseball analogy from the 'good ol' days' b4 the DH (Designated Hitter) rule came in2 effect in the American League. There was a time when ALL players, regardless of position, were expected 2 field, throw, and hit 4 themselves. A man was required 2 be well versed in ALL aspects and subtleties of the game. The pitcher, when he took the ball from the umpire @ the beginning of the game fully expected 2 finish his start—and there was no middle-reliever, 'set-up man' or closer 2 bail him out of a tough situation. A ballplayer took his responsibility seriously and prepared himself 2 serve his team in whatever capacity over the entire course of the game. Each man was the 'back-bone' of his team and their collective f8 ultimately resided in the resiliency and 4titude of that individual. I imagine each man on a team 2 represent a building within a city. Each building endeavor is 2 be taken seriously—each building built 2 last. The ultimate f8 of our cities resides in the ability of individual buildings, blocks and neighborhoods 2 shelter and provide a sustainable backdrop 4 housing, educ8ional, and economic functions over long periods of time. In this paradigm, many of our cities are losing teams that aren't positioning themselves 2 succeed in the future. Real Estate Development must be considered in broader terms than the short-term, self-serving interests and/or fiscal capacity of the financier if we endeavor 2 improve the quality life 4 people, the quality of the built environment of our cities, and re-invigor8 their stagnant land-use economics.

I call 4 a moratorium on the dennigr8ion of BOTH city and countryside that is being executed by the government subsidized partnership between 'big business', ignorance, and greed that manifests itself through so-called 'suburban development'.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMENTARIES: through the lens of hip.hop

Furthermore, I call for the immediate destruction and bulldozing of suburbia and a subsequent replanting of the green spaces initially paved over to accommodate them—to be paid for by both the government subsidies that initiated their inception and the corporate money made from pillaging our landscape. I call for a new form of 'visioneering' (hip.hop improvisation and flow) to create new sustainable hybrid typologies for the development of urban enclaves and semi-rural communities @ a density capable of supporting mixed-use neighborhoods and micro-economies.

We shall never attempt to make these new places visually reflect extant ones—rather contextually respect those that have worked well over time. We must acknowledge that our existence is connected to a different energy, spirit, sense of temporality, and unique notions about craft and situation. We must respect these differences. We must also, however, acknowledge the reality rooted in this contemporary existence that in many, many ways, the 'modern project' was a horrible mistake—especially @ the urban level—disjointing once dense, nuclear cities from their essential mixed-use nature and killing them like an organ transplant or blood transfusion gone wrong...horribly wrong. The city as we knew it died when living, shopping, working, learning, teaching, and entertaining was separated into 'zones' replacing mixed-use transit oriented nodes and hubs—supplanting them in favor of the automobile expressway/highway. We must endeavor to return the city to a familiar 'sustainable' pedestrian scale where we demonstrate both an understanding of and respect for the vernacular progression from trail to village to town to city. Main Street developed fundamentally as a transit corridor enroute to the marketplace ultimately evolving into a CBD (Central Business District) core. It took a distinct shape/arm in response to the environmental and cultural contexts in which it developed. A footpath turned native trail—avoiding and circumnavigating various obstinate terrain or circumscribing a 'sacred' place—becoming a horse route, then cart/carriage road, and ultimately a street facilitating travel via car, truck, bus, and street car. From spoken word to codified writing, so to speak, the path which began as sacred is paved and becomes mundane—but like hip.hop, retains its vernacularly imbued value by not eliminating its ancestral uses but by adding layers of complexity to them. This vernacular trail/trade route/postal route created a scalar relationship with the inhabitants who dug in and settled along its expanse—dwelling (living,

ARCHITECTURAL COMMENTARIES: through the lens of hip.hop

working, trading goods, and practicing rituals) in constant resolution with the 'city' developing around them. Modern disrespect of these processes and relations has led to the horrific scalar imbalances that characterize the modern city—almost instantaneously tearing and ripping apart the urban fabric that evolved from the situation of this particular place over a particular period of time...rendering the vernacular 'urban loom' obsolete. The unsustainable nature of the city in contemporary western culture necessitates a return to the 'urban loom'—albeit using new materials and technology, but nonetheless a return to weaving at the human scale in favor of people and their needs, desires, and aspirations rather than continuing to serve the so-called convenience of the automobile, and nauseum.

So what is the notion of the 'walking city' today?

Can hip.hop begin to reshape how the city relates to itself?

Recall the vernacular clarity and 'everyday genius' of the Midwestern farm house—legible at many scales—revealing the direction of the prevailing winter winds through the location of the 'planted' grove of trees behind it that acts as a pseudo-natural wind-blocking mechanism and the direction of the plantings in the field relating to solar orientation during the growing season. These semiotic indicators read in a clear, logical manner to the initiated—but can be understood in terms of human comfort and environmental situation to those who are not. The inscription of the 'walking city' can be traced and deciphered with a similar legibility...deCerteau alludes to this process.

Within this milieu, the modern city emerges as a scar—a blemish on the time-space continuum that documents the urban condition—signified and exemplified by the boundless expanses of surface parking lots and the quickly obsolescing 'megaforms' that they serve. The healthy 'tissue' of the old 'walking city' is diseased by modern 'urban renewal', 'cleared site' initiatives, and short-sighted post-war (WW II) public policy that ravaged the surface and grew into malignant tumor-like edifices ('big box' stores, hi-rise public housing tracts, suburban subdevelopments,

etc) and slash-like tracks emerging as roadways (expressways, suburban strips, etc.). The remnants of the 'walking city' that survived to be passed down to us retains all the elements necessary to replicate healthy tissue production—transit nodes, hubs, urban green spaces, and underutilized spaces with great potential—we must learn to decipher and reappropriate them in response to unique, quickly mutating socio-economic and geo-political conditions. Emergent hip.hop architectural interventions will create new sets of spatial relationships that will allow for multiple readings, overlays, and tracings—telling a new story in exciting ways.

HIP.HOP ARCHITECTURE

Hip-Hop architecture is not characterized by any definitive or predetermined aesthetic manifestation/expression (as an end result). It is however about processes—the process of conceiving (thought), the process of making (building/construction) and the process of inhabiting (experiential, phenomenological)—understood best both by the acts of walking and dwelling of human end-users. Its success is gauged by whether people feel the flow of energy, which is hip.hop, as they circulate, circumnavigate, and ambulate through the spaces. This notion separates it from the so-called "avant-garde" which is focused—almost solely—on the visual aesthetic of the final result. This type of intellectual masturbation and subsequent premature ejaculation results in static, objectified, space implying a collusionary effort by the so-called architectural elite to articulate ideas in exclusionary language and on terms that are transverse to the comprehension of the 'un-initiated'—displacing their humanity and rendering them, merely, as inept visual entourage elements.

Indeed, it is easy to feign genius when one endeavors to expound their rhetoric in ways that few can understand—and even fewer yet can criticize.

THE HIP.HOP ARCHITECT

Our challenge is to create an architecture that 'suggests' rather than 'dictates' and 'approaches an understanding' rather than 'presupposing a position/pretension of 'superior' knowledge (often articulated by our propensity to evoke complex, coded, lexiconic speech patterns that begin in the realm of structuralist philosophy and are corrupted in, well, 'archispeak')...I find that creating an architecture that seeks to reorganize, redistribute, and reinhabit space rather than simply 'objectify' and 'occupy' it—within the current architectural milieu—is a most challenging and difficult task...but that I am committed to pursuing and exploring.

I hope that my attempts and struggles within this arena will crack open the door for others to reconsider our 'collective role' as architects...and instead of the 'modern' LeCorbusian notion of 'architect as GOD'—maybe it could suffice to consider ourselves, rather, as 'interpreters of GODs will' (so to speak) in the sense that we have a certain training as problem solvers, an understanding (in varied ways) of the historical precedents that have collectively led us to this precise moment in time (i.e. Borgesian idea introduced in the poem 'the causes') and we each individually possess a certain artistic intuition...the combination of these factors and skill sets will allow us to best serve contemporary society in the role of 'interpreting' both the needs AND aspirations of the client/society, negotiating the pragmatics of the building process, and reappropriating the artistic license to 'trust our hands' in creating spaces capable of inciting multiple readings over multiple moments in time....indeed I prefer the role of 'interpreter' over that of hegemonic delineator of space/style/etc. (ala WTCs botched so-called design competition modus operandi typical of the present day stagnation of our profession)...

Maybe hip hop can open the 'ciph' and take this discussion both back into the realm of romantic ancient idealism AND forward into the future of the technological 'matrix' (ala Keanu Reeves et al.) that we currently occupy along the time-space continuum.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMENTARIES: through the lens of hip.hop

In this bundle of transformations lies, possibly, a new set of questions for architecture...it seems to me that a focus on infrastructure in the new global information economy creates a conceptual and practical opening for architecture."

THE NEW CENTRALITY
Saskia Sassen
1996

This 'opening' referenced by Saskia Sassen may indeed relate to hip-hop architecture...

The writing of the city may be indecipherable, flawed, but that does not mean that there is no writing; it may simply be that we developed a new literacy, a new blindness...The best definition of the aesthetic of the Generic City is "free style..."

GENERIC CITY
Rem Koolhaas
1998

The writing referenced by Rem could certainly relate to the literal/figurative graffiti writing that I often use as a catalyst for the design process...

'freestyle'....hmmmm.

I like that.

'a new literacy' to counterpoint our 'new blindness(es)'.

Ya.

I see hip.hop architecture, ultimately, as a communication of movement and flow from the perspective of the artist/designer. I see the hip.hop architect as a mediator, translator, and incubator of this energy flow—a 'go between', oscillating back and forth between the art form and the building process. Our quest must be to create resonant spaces—places in which the human body can tune into the energy flow that initially necessitated the act of making--building @ that specific place @ that specific time.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMENTARIES: through the lens of hip.hop

Yes, we must tap in2 the same resonant spirit and sensibility that drove ancient 'master builders' and craftsman 2 build pyramids, temples, and cathedrals that transcend the level of visual appreci8ion and arrive @ a meta4ic st8 of 3-dimensional sp8ial communic8ion--catalyzing the human body and spirit—bringing both 2 a higher realm of spiritual awareness than was previously imagined.

Hip-Hop, like jazz b4 it, functions best in the realm of improvis8ion but acknowledges that @ some point it must be written down (documented). In the ancient tradition of oral culture, it is the pen (inscription) that kills language and ritual—but it is the 'spoken word' that revives and resurrects it. Indeed, 2day architecture is communic8ed @ the written level, but our quest is toward balance...between movement (flow) and datum (static), spoken (dynamic) and written (codified)—enroute 2 harmonic resonance.

I believe that only 4rays in2 uncertain mental territory in pursuit of such resonant harmony will prepare architects 4 the un4seeable challenges that lie ahead--provoking, stimul8ing, cre8ing adjacent conditions and implic8ions that rel8 2 new ways of interpreting, responding 2, and representing the complex sp8ial logistics that will ultimately define our 'collective' success as 21st century architects and designers within this [global cosmopolis](#).