

Mania:

An Emergent Sustainability of Density and Intensity

*By Bryan Norwood and the Jackson
Community Design Center*

We are here. That fact is for sure. Also, there are a lot of us and will be more of us in the near future—the projected global population by the end of the 21st century is 9-10 billion. This is not a fortunate fact for the biosphere. According to the biologist E. O. Wilson, humans are the most destructive living creatures that can be introduced into any natural environment, and we are sprawling across the globe quickly, invading fragile ecosystems and converting diverse environments into a single fluid element—capital.¹ Talk of sustainability often begs the question of what we are trying to sustain. If it is simply our current life, then sustainability only amounts to the statement that “we cannot continue to live our lives like we are, unless we sustain them.” No one can argue with that. However, when sustainability’s goal is to preserve as much of the natural world as possible (not simply sustain humans in it) and raise the standard of human life and appreciation for life, it is no longer simply about continuing to live the current lifestyle, it is about urbanism. It is about population density and life intensity.

Urbanism and Sustainability

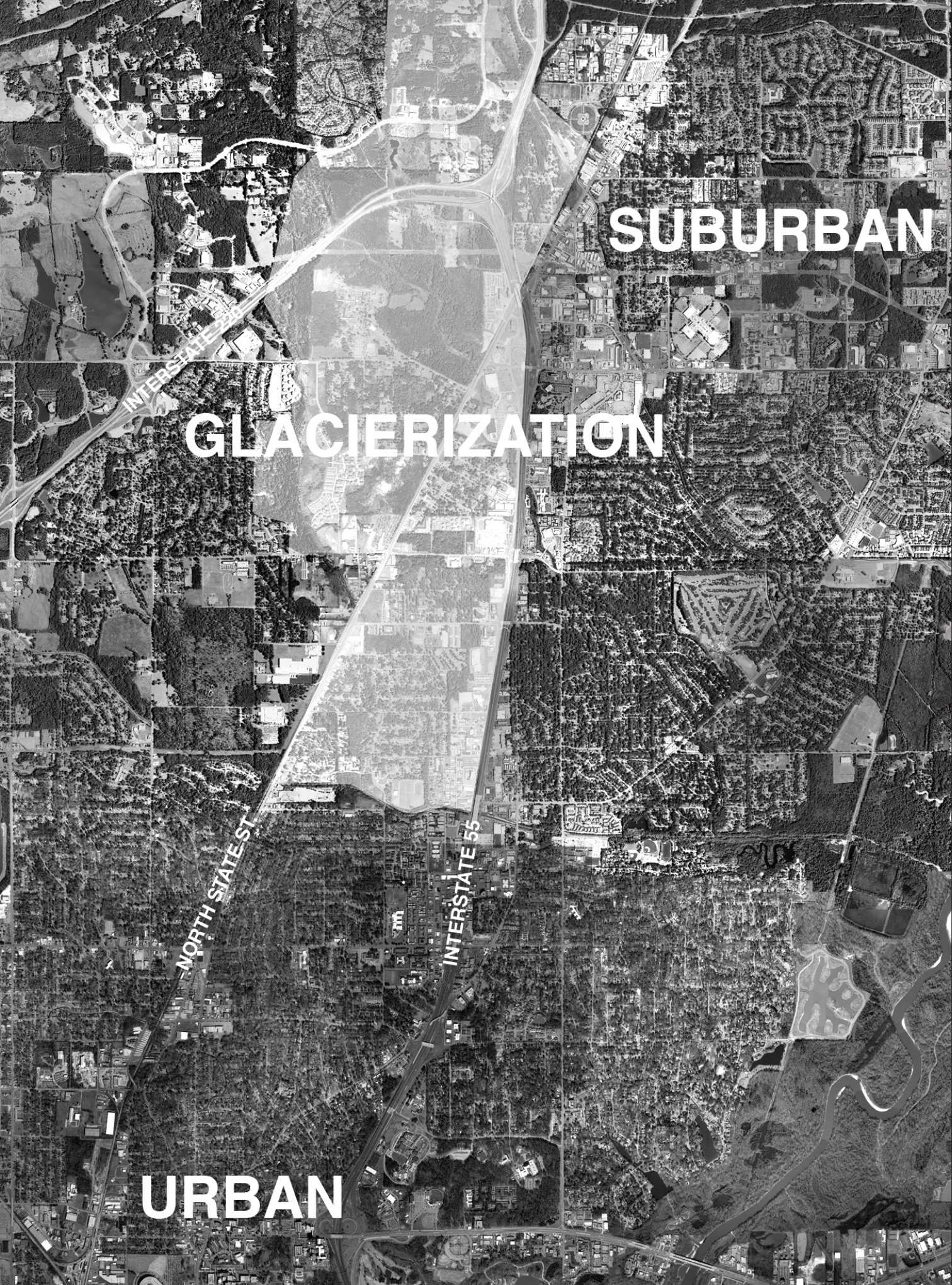
Humanity's first choice in the struggle to be sustainable is not which kind of urbanism, but whether to be urban. Urbanism at its heart is a clean ideology, because it depends on density and intensity—the only hope in preventing destructive human sprawl. Urbanization sustains people and natural life (not that the line between the two can be simply drawn). Unfortunately, a lot of faux-urbanisms exist. Many plans to produce urbanism begin and end with organized, rationalized planning that fails to acknowledge the impotence of urban control. Urbanism at its heart is a product of mania—an emergent, post-human property created by the disorganized, hyperactivity of an actualized system with no specified, singular goal. It is a bottom-up phenomenon that emerges from the individual events of architecture in the city combined with the ideology of urbanism. Mania produces feverish competition in an anarchic environment where forces to order and disorder, to striate and smooth, the city compete. Mania is an internal product of a system outside of which no one can step. It is self-contained, delimited, and self-sufficient.

. . . Mania is an ideology of Clean Urbanism . . .

The ideology of mania is not imposed from the outside, it develops internally—a development made possible by a critical mass of roughly 10,000 people per square mile or higher—through competition.² Only 16 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) in the United States even contain pockets that are this dense; all of these MSAs contain over 1 million people and 11 of the 16 contain more than 4 million. Density pockets can be formed in these powerhouse cities because of the sheer number of people and the resultant life-intensity, but what of mid-size cities and the sprawl that surrounds them? What are these cities that lack critical mass to do? How do they create mania?

Downtown revitalization movements and New Urbanist villages are popular and abundant all across the US, and they come with the desire to create density, walkability, and, almost always, socio-economic and stylistic facism. Most of these faux-urbanisms are simulations of old ideas of mania, working on a limited scope that refuses to acknowledge the regional scale of urbanism. These movements are based on an antiquated model of the city—a centralized, omnipotent model. At its most honest, New Urbanism admits to being a backwards looking, authoritarian regime, and at its worst, Collage City pretends to have found mania, while secretly still pursuing omnipotence and control. Mania is a condition that can only emerge in the process of actualization in the present (it only exists in the moment it is occurring, it cannot be planned before or from the outside), where as urban omnipotence and counterfeit complexity begins in the virtual world where mania itself is a representation (signifier) of a past idea (signified). Mania is not an emergent process when the virtual and actual have a one-to-one correlation—nothing emerges or moves bottom-up. Mania does not come from a plan that tries to model the mania before hand. Urbanism in the 21st century cannot be a representation of old models of mania, it has to be rethought.

In becoming sustainable, the mid-size metropolitan area must be rethought. Sustainability is often based on a rural model where as urbanism is often based on a model drawn from the top five to ten percent most populous cities. What is the mid-size MSA—the generic city? One characteristic that seems common to most of the 288 mid-



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size MSAs (roughly 100,000 to 1,000,000 people) is the presence of underdeveloped space between the city and suburbs. These spaces may be the subconscious product of creating defensible space between suburbs and the trouble of the city, or they may be the result of simple economics. Regardless of why they formed, these spaces are major players in metropolitan life—from the daily commute between city and suburbs to the continual expansion of suburban growth rings to placing major limitations on the viability of public transit. The question of mania and thus clean urbanism in the mid-size MSA is what to do with these **glacierized** spaces.

Glacierization

What exactly is Glacierization? The definition of a glacier, being a large body of ice that moves with unbelievable force and friction, is apparent enough. The more common word to describe the action of glaciers is glaciation coming from the verb glaciare, which is to freeze, to subject to or produce glacial action, or to cover with a glacier. However, in 1922 Wright and Priestly introduced glacierization to distinguish glacial inundation from its geologic consequences.³ Glacierization specifically has taken the role of describing the covering of a land mass with a glacial ice. What is the glacierization of the built environment? It cannot simply be the built environment that covers the land, it must be an action, but it is not any action that covers the land—many other processes exist such as flooding, eruptions, and landslides. Glacierization is a specific process where land is covered by a slow process that consumes an area and covers it with a slow moving mass. Glacierized spaces do have edges, but the edges are not always clear. In the middle, the individual is lost in non-place. The boundary condition and cracks and ridges of a glacier may be somewhat clear from above, but on the ground space is much less defined.

Glacierization of the built environment is a two step process that begins with quick deterritorialization that is followed by a reaction of weak reterritorialization that freezes creativity.⁴ The first step in the two step process of glacierization, quick deterritorialization, occurs when cities sprawl. Infrastructure grows faster than the city and becomes lines of flight that escaped the territorialized assemblage of the city. The interstate and the internet have become the ultimate providers of quick deterritorialization that have allowed the city to expand beyond a traditional framework of walkable and intimate cores.

The second step in glacierization is weak reterritorialization, which is the danger of deterritorializing in the first place. Deleuze and Guattari describe this process:

*"It is inaccurate to say that the State apparatus is territorial: it in fact performs a D[eterritorialization], but one immediately overlaid by reterritorializations on property, work, and money (clearly, that landownership, public or private, is not territorial but reterritorializing)."*⁵

This is the real danger of deterritorialization—smooth space imposed to control striated space by reterritorializing.⁶ Deleuze and Guattari offer the example of submarines using the ocean as smooth space (deterritorialized space) on behalf of the State in order to con-



Maniacal zoning plan for glacierized space

trol the striated space of shipping lanes and connections between the cities above. Weak Reterritorialization gives up on the terror of mania that deterritorialization creates and instead invokes a singular meaning to the space. Although there is no iron-fisted omnipotent control to crush mania, there is also no intensity or density to make mania happen. Weak conditions are unable to deal with the conflict so they neither assert themselves nor choose to disappear. Glacierized space is neither left alone, nor is it propelled forward. The process of weak retrerritorialization takes place slowly as the glacier builds and the development of the area between city and suburbs slows to a crawl. Glacierization is not about a permanent end product, it is a process that is dependent on a constant state of becoming. If the slow covering of an area stops, glacierization is no longer occurring and the conditions have changed to the point of stall.

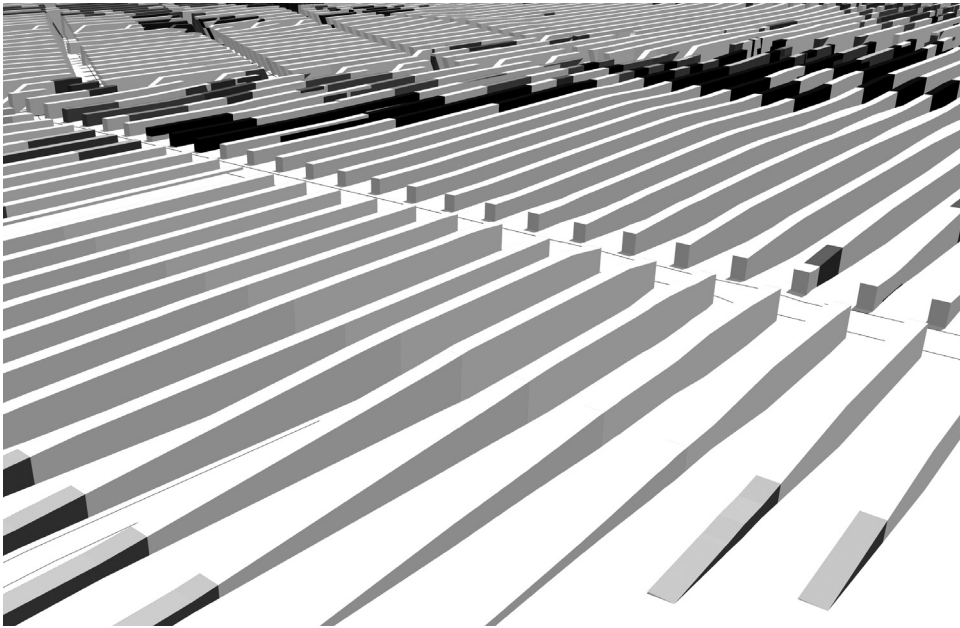
Glacierization is neither truly suburban or urban. Suburbanism is possible because of an ideology of private space combined with cars and high speed information technology. Urbanism is possible because of the vertical dimension of the city that maintains street edges and puts emphasis back on this environment (whether it be a grid in New York or layers of historical planning in Rome). However, in glacierized space over extended infrastructure does not create a background (neither a grid at human scale nor an urban history) for development, so everything that occurs is enacted on a pure plane, a plane on which no difference exists. Weak retrerritorialization fails to be imaginative (it fails to create multiple, novel connections) and homogeneity prevents mixture and mania. Glacierized space will always be a silent, limping body of non-place as long as urbanism continues to be conceived in a traditional framework. Glacierized space is the least maniacal space of mid-size cities and it also produces some of the least sustainable practices (space that is merely for transportation), however these spaces are ripe with potential for density and mania—the glacier just has to first be melted.

The location of glacierized space between the urban and suburban presents the possibility for a new type of urbanism, not just an averaging. Full of brownfields and underutilized infrastructure, these areas can attain high density with limited material. Possibilities of public transit abound, while suburban security still seems attainable. Urbanism can no longer be practiced as a backwards looking phenomena, simply observing lessons from the past about walkable communities, scaled elements, and urban-town center zones. As Koolhaas writes, planning has rediscovered "the virtues of the classical city at the moment of their definitive impossibility." ⁷ Relationships must be rethought and functions must be reorganized.

Anti-capitalism

The process of glacierization, deterritorialization followed by weak retrerritorialization, is an apparatus of capture that molds and organizes State thinking (top-down), a phenomena described by Bonta and Protevi:

"Through the process of overcoding, preexistent regimes of signs (in mixture) are decoded and subjected to the ends of an organiz-



New zoning map in 3 dimensions

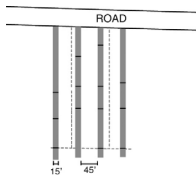
*ing, centralizing, hierarchizing machine that turns activity into work (labor), territories into 'the land,' and surplus value into capital. Land ownership is the apparatus of capture of the earth; labor and particularly surplus labor (for example, of the type used to build imperial monuments and public works of all kinds) is the apparatus of capture of activity."*⁸

Capitalism territorializes the world through the creation of a homogenous unit that becomes the primary form of measurement: capital. Capitalism does deterritorialize by allowing free exchange between different systems—for example, a time-image can be equated with man hours through capital (working at Walmart for an hour to make money to go see a movie)—but with this deterritorialization comes the reterritorialization towards homogeneity in the form of capital as the primary epistemological and ontological unit. The primacy of capital is epitomized in political ideologies that say (explicitly or implicitly) the ultimate measure of a good, healthy society is economic growth. To truly deterritorialize, flows cannot be *flows of*, a condition which reinstates a form of transcendence (the God of money).

To reconfigure the apparatus of capture and glacierization, the systems of organization and hierarchy have to be attacked through deterritorialization. Deterritorializing is accomplished by increasing anti-production, a line of flight that continually escapes the state apparatus of capture. To escape capitalism, Deleuze suggests proliferation, which Claire Colebrook describes: "In an era of capitalism, where any exchange is quantifiable and reinvested to produce further exchange, Deleuze insisted on an expenditure and excess: production that are not for any foreseeable or calculable end but that produce the new as such."⁹

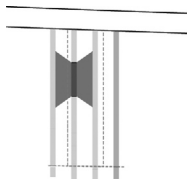
Lines of flight or connections have to go beyond capital, and the territory of the land (i.e. new connections have to become more diverse). Creativity is the result of deterritorialization, which "occurs when an event of becoming escapes or detaches from its original territory."¹⁰ Colebrook points to language as an example. Humanity uses language to territorialize, but art has the power to break down language and make it meaningless once again. Of course, the danger of over-production to deterritorialize and create mania is sprawling deterritorialization happening too fast without the necessary density to cause mania (i.e. the suburbs) and the loss of humanity all together, which sets up the conditions for weak reterritorialization once again.

On the surface, Deleuziogauttarian creativity can seem absurd (even cynical) or chaotic. Why continue to encourage the disorder and meaninglessness that has seemed to cause so many problems for the city? We need order, rationality, and a meaning for our city! The critique of mania being meaninglessness is premised on a traditional view of the nature of signification (signifier-signified), something Deleuze explicitly challenges. Deterritorializing is necessarily a break with meaning as traditionally conceived because the signified, the real is no longer any different than the signifier. Mania is not meaningless, it is overfilled with meaning—meaning-full. Deleuze promotes expenditure and excess with no particular foundation or end to break with the commodity logic of capitalism, and to create these conditions in glacierized environments new diagrammatic order is needed. What follows is a proposal to rethink the virtual in order to melt the glacier through excess in actualization.



1 selling

Zoning bar ownership is based on the existing property on which the new bar resides. Sold property can have multiple zonings, but the segment sold must contain at least fifteen continuous feet of each zoning type (indicated in figure below by black lines). The space between bars is owned by no one.



2 projection

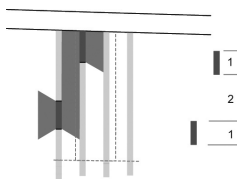
All sites can project off at 30 degrees in all directions, including the vertical dimension.

3 how to project

The projection of a zoning lot begins with filing a claim to the projected area and submitting a preliminary site plan, after which construction on that area must begin within 1 year for residential and 2 years for commercial, industrial, and special use. Otherwise, the lot is forfeited back to public domain and a fine may be imposed. For exceptional cases on certain buildings over 40,000 square feet, the owner may apply for an extension of design time.

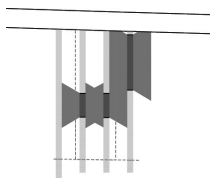
4 lot stringing

Adjacent lots can be strung together to be built as continuous form.



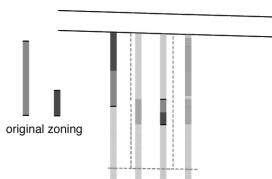
4.1 distance limitations

When lots are owned on adjacent bars, the owner has the right to connect between these bars, but with a limitation that parallel space between the two bars be no longer than the combined length of the owned bars.



4.2 number limitations

Any number of adjacent lots can be strung together by a single or collective owner.



5 function switching

A percentage of any zoning type can be traded for another type as long as an area of equal percentage can be found. Only percentages, not square or linear feet are traded. This trade can also involve additional money and incentives. A whole plot of a zone does not have to be sold.

Images and Text above:

Maniacal Zoning 1.0 (Maniacal Zoning 1.0 is based on a system of fifteen foot wide bars that are bought and sold in segments of fifteen feet or greater. These bars are owned like regular property, but may have multiple zonings vertically that can also be bought and sold based on vertical zoning changes. The 45 foot space between bars, interstitial space, is owned by no one. Unowned interstitial spaces can only be claimed by constructing and using.)

Maniacal zoning and the future of glacierization

So far, we have argued that the way to clean urbanism is through mania—an emergent, post-human property created by disorganized hyperactivity—that is the product of density and intensity. Glacierized space in mid-size metros has been identified as a potential area for future urbanism that lacks mania, and over-production as a form of anti-capitalism that deterritorializes the weak reterritorialization of glacierized space has been projected as the means to create the necessary mania for clean urbanism. The final step is to establish a method for initiating anti-capitalistic over-production and deterritorialization. How can an emergent phenomena that has no one goal be instituted from a top down perspective? How can an individual or collective conscious decide that "this is where mania will occur"? How could urbanism, a doctrine of compactness, overcome the extreme horizontal distance between city and suburbs? How could suburbanism and its flight from the city move back towards it, especially when most development seems to be pushing farther away?

Mania is an actualized condition in the city, and any large scale intervention into the city on an actualized scale is going to have the remnants of singularity (i.e. architecture). Masterplanning suffers from the counterfeit omnipotence of practicing urbanism like architecture. What happens when urbanism is practiced as a prerequisite to mania rather than as mania itself? Virtualization. Recognizing the equality of the virtual and actual, which necessarily implies that neither is more real, is necessary for maniacal urban intervention, and one of the possible tools of urban instigation is property/zoning.

When urbanism is practiced as virtualization, the image and the ideology that creates it is real, and the actualization that follows the image is also real. The notion of an ideal model that images copy can be dismissed as both a wrongheaded product of nostalgia or a postmodern simulacra. Instead, with both the virtual and the actual considered equally real, the fact that a virtual can be instantiated in a myriad of actualities allows mania, provided that the virtual is not too constricting. The project of maniacal rezoning is aimed at producing critical mass and life activity-density and intensity—resulting in clean urbanism.

What happens when zoning no longer corresponds with the physical environment? when property ownership no longer corresponds to construction possibilities? when the real is a designed virtual and maniacal actual?

In maniacal zoning 1.0 the method of territorial escape is not through literal lines and connections in the zoning field, but rather a zoning field that encourages creativity and production as quickly and wildly as possible. The response to glacierization is to create clear zones for free connection that speed actualization, not real estate speculation. Vertical zoning that creates unzoned and unowned free space between planes that only becomes territorialized through an actualization of building is a means to encourage production and connections, along with the ability to trade and connect zones.

It is important to note that the forms and spaces in the maniacal zoning plan will not necessarily correlate with architectural form and space—that is to say what is virtually mapped does not have a

one to one relationship with what will be built. The translation or transformation from mapped space to built form is another step towards mania.

The pattern of deterritorialization and weak reterritorialization occurs all over the US and glacierized spaces abound, although these spaces are not permanent. Los Angeles, a city traditionally seen as the king of sprawl and all-things bad by anti-sprawl activists is now the second densest MSA in America with a regional population density of over 7,000 people per square mile. As the city evolves and property begins to push as far from the city core as is economically or practically feasible, glacierized areas are infilling at high densities as land value close to the inner city climbs.¹¹ However, glacierization has seen less movement in mid-size MSAs, a portion of MSAs that hold about thirty percent of the US population.

The challenge for urban thinkers is to take advantage of glacierized spaces and rethink urbanism. Maniacal zoning 1.0 is just one attempt at density and intensity oriented zoning. New forms of deterritorialized space should be explored: zoning/ownership as series of points, lines, symbiotic relationships, events, performances. Density and intensity are at the root of finding our way out of the current economic and environmental crises; create these two conditions and sustainability will follow. Urbanism is anti-capitalism and anti-homogenization.

It is mania, and mania is clean.

Bryan Norwood is a recent graduate of Mississippi State University and currently a graduate student in the philosophy Ph.D. program at Boston University. His current research at the Jackson Community Design Center is on the intersection of poststructuralism and urbanism, and in particular its connection to mid-size metropolitan areas.

The Jackson Community Design Center, JCDC for short, is an urban think tank based out of the Mississippi State University College of Architecture, Art, and Design that focuses on mid-size American cities. The JCDC's current focus is on diagnosing growth trends and proposing sustainable modes of urban development.

1 Edward O. Wilson catalogues these destructive habits in a chapter entitled "The Planetary Killer" of *The Future of Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 79-102. The fluid element of capital may act as a deterritorializing machine that allows rhizomatic connections, but it also allows heterogeneous environments to be made homogenous, thus effectively eliminating the ability to understand biodiversity in any other terms than capital. This view of capital comes from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 424-73. Hereafter referred to as ATP.

2 Density at this level is the density necessary for the widespread use of public transit according to Robert Bruegmann, *Sprawl: A Compact History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 55.

3 The American Meteorological Society, "Glossary of Meteorology," 2nd Edition, <http://amsglossary.allenpress.com/glossary/browse?s=g&p=20>.

4 According to Bonta and Protevi, the source of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of striated space comes from glacial striations. See Mark Bonta and John Protevi, *Deleuze and Geophilosophy: A Guide and Glossary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 9. We are turning this word slightly to mean something different than their idea of the glacial.

5 Deleuze and Guattari, ATP, 508.

6 Deleuze and Guattari, ATP, 480.

7 Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau, and OMA, *S, M, L, XL*, 2nd edition, (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997), 963

8 Bonta and Protevi, 52.

9 Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (London: Routledge, 2002), 66.

10 Colebrook, 59.

11 Bruegmann, 67.