THE APPARATUS OF THE INVISIBLE LANDSCAPE: SENSING BEYOND SIGHT

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Regarding Sensory Data

The act of extravisual sensing in the landscape has a long tradition that dates back to the first attempts to describe the behavior of our surroundings, which evade pure observation. These experiments led to the first scientific discoveries regarding our non-visible environment, and the very first tools with which to quantify these phenomena.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the term "atmosphere" can be as easily applied to non-visible sensory data as to the tangible and often emotional impact of a space on its occupant. The influence of these atmospheric effects on human comfort and well-being is in and of itself a well-documented and dedicated discipline of research.[1] In order to understand our complex and ever-evolving cities and built environments, the collection and study of atmospheric data forms a key part of both the research and design at the Landscape Visualization and Modeling Lab (LVML), at the Chair of Christophe Girot.

This data can be thought of as part of the mass of information that is commonly referred to as "Big Data," a term which has come to describe firstly the massive excess of all the data generated and collected by our cultural interaction with digital technologies, and secondly the process of its centralization. This field of research and its resulting data fascination is often used to describe the performance of the actors, fabric and spaces of the city.[2] Such data is often intriguing for its sheer complexity, the apparent wealth of information and its cyclical patterns. What we can observe based on current tendencies is that embedded in this concept of Big Data is the aim to create a comprehensive, all-encompassing, temporal model of the subject of study, in which no data is without merit.

That is not to say that there is not a fair share of skepticism in this rapid shift to implementing Big Data within the design realm.[3] Indeed, this trend toward an all-encompassing dataset can be seen to present an

1 Sigrid Reiter and André De Herde, "Qualitative and Quantitative Criteria for Comfortable Urban Public Spaces," in *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Building Physics* (2011), 2. ORBi.

2 Bernd Resch, Rex Britter and Carlo Ratti, "Live Urbanism – Towards SENSEable Cities and Beyond," *Sustainable Environmental Design in Architecture* (Springer, 2012), 175.