'The Future is just around the Corner...' – The construction of urban narratives through temporary supergraphics

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Abstract

Drawings play various roles in (and in-between) the processes of design, construction and the continuous use and appropriation of space. This article explores large drawing elements positioned at building sites. It discusses how decision makers, developers, planners and design professionals actively use such representational means to create site and project narratives for the site preparation and construction phase. Two projects and sites are presented here in order to illustrate and explore the role of large on-site supergraphics during site transformation. The main aim is to explore how they configure specific conceptions of time. The first is Ōtautahi: An Origin Story, a large comic strip mounted on the hoardings of the building site for a new convention centre in Christchurch, New Zealand, as part of the city's post-earthquake rebuild. The second case is a ground mural in the Danish town of Køge featuring a map in a section of a temporary urban space called The Space of Time that is part of the town's harbour transformation. The analysis engages with theoretical perspectives on visual culture, drawing and space – in particular urban comics, cartography, mapping, site thinking and transformation. It sheds light on an emerging phenomenon in contemporary urban culture – one characterized by hybrid authorships, ambiguous aesthetics and time-space constellations.

Introduction: when the future is just around the corner

Redevelopment and large-scale urban transformation projects take time. Designers, planners, agencies and public authorities can employ a variety of strategies for continuously communicating, visualizing and contextualizing the (desired) changes, including newsletters, meetings, exhibitions, homepages, social media and flyers. They also have an opportunity to provide information on the ground. The building site – its fences, edges and borders – is more than a daily workplace for construction professionals. It is also a liminal zone between the construction work and the city. Along these edges we accept the logic of the functioning city being disrupted and pulled apart for a certain period (even for a long period, in the case of major developments and infrastructures).

Building projects and construction sites are an embedded part of urban life. That is not new. However, increasingly, it is the transient zones, where construction meets continuous urban flows, that are being actively communicated and performed. A display of what is to be built or what is already under construction, featuring basic facts such as what, who and when (companies involved, deadlines, primary layout and functions) has become a standard feature at construction site entrances. But other visual typologies may also be positioned in these settings, often in formats that are hybrids of commissioned artwork, branding, information material and physical demarcation. At times, these site-oriented temporary elements relate to – and resemble – the drawn, designed projects and their specific visual language. However, as is the case in this analysis, they also provide new and alternative constellations of drawn representations *in situ*. Here, the tool of drawing is used to bridge different time spans and narratives. This points to a need to consider the role drawings play in phases in which the ordinary design work is often considered finalized and the construction is beginning to take shape. In these phases the focus is on the mode of production and design decisions are most often communicated as 'done and dusted' to the outside world.

This paper begins with the analysis of two large-scale visual displays: namely, a long comic strip mounted on a construction site hoarding, and a horizontal ground-level mural covering a public square. Both projects are part of major urban transformation projects. The Ōtautahi: An Origin Story project (2017-2019) was displayed during the construction of the Christchurch Convention Centre (Te Pae), as part of the rebuild of the city of Christchurch (New Zealand) following the devastating 2010-2011 earthquakes.

a   b   c

FIGURE 1 Sections of Ōtautahi: An Origin Story. The panels have a particular focus on the post-quake rebuild. (2018)

The second drawing discussed is a large ground mural – a map that is part of a space named *The Space of Time* (2014-). This drawing is part of the harbour transformation in the Danish coastal town of Køge, south of Copenhagen. The development consists of a 20 to 25-year development process which began in 2009. What happens when these visuals enter the public realm as interfaces which belong neither to the specific sketching and design work, nor to the material construction of the built structures themselves? They are artefacts possessing their own visual language and role, inhabiting the transient zone of construction and transformation taking place on site. Communicative constructions of urban futures affect both space and

mediatization (Christmann et al., 2020) and how narratives concerning sites are selected, cultivated and distilled (Beauregard, 2020).

a   b   c

FIGURE 2   The 2030 project plan. The large painted graphic creates an entrance point to The Space of Time and the harbour development. (2015)

Drawing time: Design representation, temporality and emerging sites

In this article, the complexity of the *becoming* space (the site of construction and its activities) is the focus for a discussion on time and drawing(s). This is less about design drawings in a traditional sense. Instead, it is about considering drawings as interfaces that frame project communication and placemaking efforts through visual narratives. Most often, professionals produce and negotiate their design drawings off-site. Drawing content is informed by site visits, and by considering data on local conditions, but the visuals rarely have a direct physical relation to the site. This 'cleaving of field and work' (Emmons, 2011, p. 128) is a consequence of modern modes of production (Forty, 2000, p. 30). 'Projection' and 'production' belong, in most cases, to separate spatial spheres (Braae, 2015, p. 284). However, if project materials – such as plans and visualizations – are positioned *in situ*, they co-produce and engage with the space, as part of the site's material reality. How can we understand such on-site representations in relation to both spatial production and the construction of specific desired narratives and time perspectives? What ideas of past, present and future can we experience through these elements, and what do they do? How is time drawn, who draws it, and what does it result in?

Ichnography, comics and supergraphics

The two projects represent two well-known drawing typologies, the multi-frame comic and the ichnographic ground plan. Both drawing types have long traditions within visual culture and come with different sets of properties and connotations. The term 'ichnography' refers to the creation of a ground plan. The original term, first used by Vitruvius, comes from the act of tracing and imprinting a ground plan directly on the ground (Emmons, 2011, p. 119) and is a combination of the Greek word for tracing or outlining *Ikhnos* and the term for writing *graphia* (Pinto, 1976, p. 35). The making of 'footprint plans' as a site-based practical and ritual practice (Emmons, 2019, p. 21) developed further through the invention of new techniques and media (Pinto, 1976). Despite being a representation that can hold large amounts of data, the plan drawing is not an ideal drawing to represent temporal development, unless presented in a serial form (Van Dooren, 2017, p. 224). The plan as a projection of a desired future defines an end result or goal (Corner, 1999, p. 94) and needs additional information to convey something about processual aspects. Multi-frame comics, on the

other hand, are sequential and time-based representations (McCloud, 1994). As with storyboards, illustrated timelines, and film media, the viewer connects the frames into a continuous narrative flow. Comics theorist Scott McCloud uses the term 'closure' to describe the process in which the viewer connects the comic panels into a storyline, 'observing the parts but perceiving the whole' (McCloud, 1994, p. 63). Additionally, time indicators such as clocks, movement lines, sound expressions and text positioning the action in time, are prominent in comic strips. The scale of the two examples *in situ* exceeds the constraints of a comic book or plan drawing on a table. Similar to the original meaning of ichnography, they are drawings made or positioned on site, using the existing surfaces. They can be regarded as examples of supergraphics, a term describing the use of large graphics in architectural settings. The supergraphic has its origins in the pop art and architecture of the late 1960s (Juanes, 2018; McClelland Morris, 2020) and has since developed into a recognizable feature of the urban environment used for wayfinding, branding and decorative purposes (Adams, 2018). Supergraphics, as specific combinations of architecture and graphic design, are omnipresent in today's urban fabric, although they are often overlooked in research (Mikhailov et al., 2020). In this article, the two visuals are described as supergraphic elements due to their scale, their direct relation to a site and their obvious graphic concepts. Their locations add perspectives on supergraphics as storytelling tools in redevelopment settings.

a

b

FIGURE 3
a. Aerial view of Christchurch CBD. The outlined area shows the convention centre site and its location in the city centre. (Google Earth/ Image 2021 © Maxar Technologies, 2021).
b. Christchurch Convention and Exhibition Centre. The site plan outlines the position of the facility and the adjacent functions and areas, such as the Ōtākaro/Avon River and major cultural facilities. (Illustration: Ōtākaro Ltd. | Woods Bagot | Warren & Mahoney | Kamo Marsh, 2017)

a

b

FIGURE 4
a. Søndre Havn in Køge. Aerial view of the harbour development area.
b. Søndre Havn masterplan. The illustration shows the masterplan as published in 2011. (Illustrations: Køge Kyst and Vandkunsten, 2011)

Approach

Based on initial observations indicating that project visuals placed on site seem to reflect an active strategy in promoting specific time-narratives, this cross-case comparison looks more closely at the appearance, background and intentions behind these two initiatives. The aim is to focus on how temporal narratives are created in the visuals themselves and in their relationship to their context and how they can be conceptualized and point to an emerging field. To do so, the analysis comprises discussion of the drawing techniques, their cultural references, history and theoretical perspectives, supplemented with information on the local contexts of the projects, the drawing content and its background. The project material was collected during site visits in the period 2015-2022. This on-site field work has been supplemented with publicly accessible project descriptions and reports, websites and social media posts. Follow-up correspondence with project managers and local professionals provided additional data and clarification as well as project drawing material and preliminary sketches.

Ōtautahi: An Origin Story

The Ōtautahi: An Origin Story project (designed by cultural activist and self-styled 'un-artist', Felicity Jane Powell) features 115 metres of images on sections of the 400-metre hoarding surrounding the new Te Pae Convention Centre in Christchurch Central City. Ōtautahi: An Origin Story sets out narratives and information from the past, present and the future of the site, and the city in general. In particular, the city's reconstruction after the two devastating earthquakes in 2010-2011 plays a major role in its timeline. The work was commissioned by Ōtākaro Limited.

According to Powell, the idea of telling these stories was to share knowledge about the city and the site and to initiate a sense of a 'gathering space' and to narrate a 'superhero story' of the city (Ōtākaro Limited, 2017). The panels include 'selfie-spots' that invite members of the public to pose and share their images on social media. In addition to the physical on-location project, the anoriginstory.co.nz website displays the 18 panels as well as additional information about the project's development and content.

The narrative begins with a legend about the creation of the Southern Island of New Zealand (where Christchurch is located). The subsequent segments describe the main values, which, according to local Māori tradition, are to be incorporated into the new convention centre.

The middle section narrates the impact and redevelopment following the two major earthquakes that hit the city in 2010 and 2011 focusing on the new 'superpowers' (panel 6) and 'a city on the rise' (panel 12).

Moving towards the future, the story returns to the convention centre project under construction behind the hoarding. The frames focus on a recognizable perspective view of the convention centre and provide a tour into and around the auditorium.

Panels 1-2:
Ōtautahi: An Origin Story.

The narrator, Koha, introduces herself and begins the storyline with a legend about the origin of the South Island of New Zealand.

(Drawings: Felicity Jane Powell/anoriginstory.co.nz, 2017)

c.
Panel 4:
Manaakitanga (charity).

Panel 4 features an explanation of one of the main values from The Convention Centre Narrative, used to describe the importance of hospitality. Different modes of transport that have been crucial for travelling to New Zealand through history are depicted.

(Drawing: Felicity Jane Powell/anoriginstory.co.nz, 2017)

d-e.
Panels 6 and 12:
The earthquakes.

Panels 6 and 12 narrate the dramatic events of the quakes and the following rebuild. The sudden and extreme event of the earthquake is illustrated with dramatic jagged lightning bolts and large yellow action bubbles. Rūaumoko, the god of earthquakes, volcanoes and seasons (panel 6) is shaking the ground and 'his kicks set the earth shaking' in the belly of the earth mother. The strong 6.3 magnitude earthquake hit the city at 12:51 on 22 February 2011 and the centrepiece of panel 6 is a large clock tower displaying exactly 12:51, referring to the fact that clocks did actually stop working. Time becomes immediate and concrete.

(Drawing: Felicity Jane Powell/anoriginstory.co.nz, 2017)

FIGURE 5 Ōtautahi: An Origin Story

e.
Panel 12:
The earthquakes.

Panel 12 features a drawing of a demolished 1870 building that was located on a corner close to the Te Pae construction site

(Drawing: Felicity Jane Powell/anoriginstory.co.nz, 2017)

f-g.
Panels 8 and 13:

The illustrations refer to well-known elements and places realized in the rebuild period, such as the striped 'street sheep' and the Dance-O-Mat, a popular open-air dance floor just around the corner from the construction site.

(Drawing: Felicity Jane Powell/anoriginstory.co.nz, 2017)

h.
Panel 11.

Found structures and artefacts from archaeological excavation as messengers from the past. The earth cracking open in panel 11 and the bulldozer breaking the comic frame (panel 9, Fig. 2) are examples of movement and action, damage and demolition as temporal evidence of the devastating disaster.

(Drawing: Felicity Jane Powell/anoriginstory.co.nz, 2017)
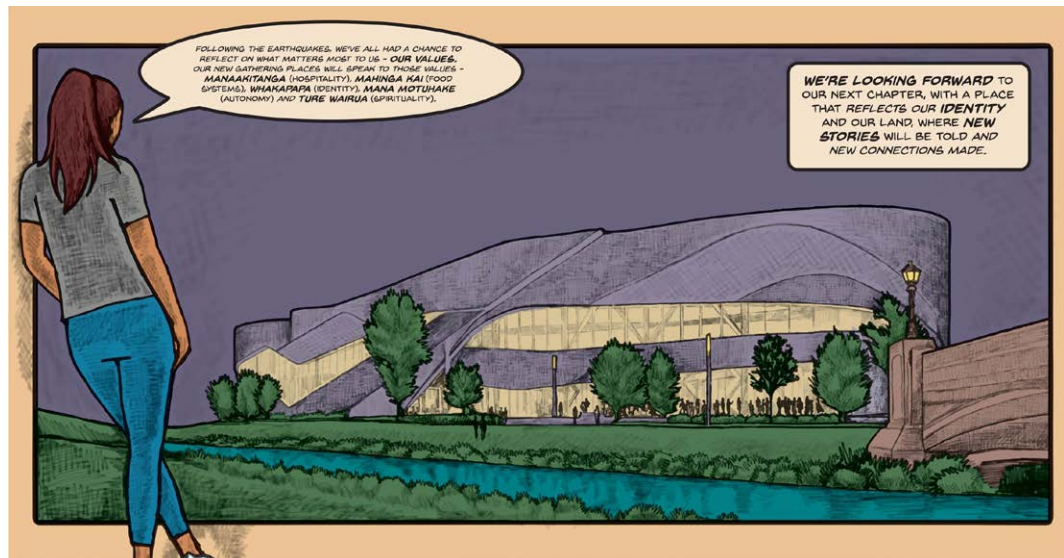

e

f

g

h

i-j.
Panels 14 and 15:

The panels transport us to the 'not-too-distant-future' of the city and its new 'gathering place on the horizon', the convention centre.

(Drawing: Felicity Jane Powell/anoriginstory.co.nz, 2017)

i

j

Telling time - From legends to insta-moments

Both the drawing style and the superhero narrative in Ōtautahi: An Origin Story refer to the well-known formats of graphic novels and comics. The inherent sequential structure of comic series is also clearly evident in this case. Different timescales are combined to narrate the city's story. Although the focus is consistently on the relations between human beings and place, the storytelling shifts in time and space and between different histories of Aotearoa (New Zealand), the city of Ōtautahi (Christchurch), and the recent Te Pae construction site itself. Traditional legends are followed by the sudden event of the earthquake. Personal stories from the creator's perspective and direct messages asking the viewer to share stories, are interwoven into the timeline with 'take a photo here' and hashtag labels.

The different temporal horizons and the transition between them are communicated by the way the graphic elements and 'iconic signifiers' (Fraser, 2019, p. 8) are positioned. The shapes and figures cross the borders of individual frames to illustrate time progression and change. For example, in the retelling of the creation of the South Island and its mountain range, the wavy pattern of the ocean segues into the mountain peaks in the next frame (Fig. 5 a-b). A multitude of references to things and places that had disappeared or appeared are incorporated into the panels. Visual and text-based descriptions of what is *not* present anymore affect both the way the present and the past are understood. Reappearing artefacts are also used narratively to link the past and the future, such as the discoveries from the archaeological excavations taking place in in context of the construction site work (Fig. 5 h). Narratives of the future are focused on the new convention centre building and panels 14-17 picture the finished convention centre and the conference activities expected to take place inside.

In his seminal book *What Time Is this Place* (1972), urban planner Kevin Lynch depicted how time and change manifest in our spaces and practices. He sketched two ways of considering the passage of time: as cycles and rhythms, and as alterations, ruptures and changes (Lynch, 1972, p. 65). Both types are inherent in both the controllable and the uncontrollable elements of our lives and environments. These diverging time conceptions, some belonging more to perspectives of the *longue durée*, others to perspectives of absolute eventual character, are linked and combined in *Otautahi: An Origin Story.* From the legend of land, the history of the city, its damage and reconstruction, to the specific building project and personal stories, different temporal narratives are nested and incorporated into one storyline. As a time drawing, the comic strip reflects an 'urban assemblage' of narratives and memories (Dittmer, 2014b, p. 499) or even a type of archival collage (Venezia, 2010, p. 190) with its arranged fragments of stories, figures and artefacts.

FIGURE 6 Te Pae Convention Centre: View from the Ōtākaro/Avon River Precinc. (Illustrations: Ōtākaro Ltd. | Woods Bagot | Warren & Mahoney | Kamo Marsh, 2017)

FIGURE 7 Proposed landscape concept plan from Christchurch Convention and Exhibition Centre Outline Plan Submission: Urban Design and Landscape Statement March 2017

Superhero city and hybrid hoardings

Stories featuring a superhero in action within the urban environment are well known. The 'superhero' in this case is the city itself. However, a close tie is made in the storyline between the city and its inhabitants. In terms of the Christchurch rebuild, this hero story depicts a challenging and messy situation, one which is nevertheless met with hopeful and proactive responses.

Political geographer Jason Dittmer points out that comic strip heroes are typically pictured as 'righteously violent' and protective of a good cause (Dittmer, 2017). In this case, however, there is no personified evil to fight, but rather a dramatic event resulting in a 'cataclysmic awakening' (Powell on anoriginstory. co.nz). The aim is rather to gather and combine encouraging narratives of place and citizenship. Critical responses to the rebuilding process, and the convention centre in particular, have been voiced in public. These include issues concerning the need for such a centre, the envisaged scale, as well as a lack of citizen involvement (Stylianou, 2015). More generally, as might be expected, the rebuild has also been a contested topic (Bennett et al., 2014) and the issues raised are not given space within this storytelling process. While the website text mentions the 'controversial beginnings' of the convention centre, the focus of the panels is on the broader history and culture, the rebuild as a collective effort, and the future facility as something that synthesises aspirations for the city. In its appearance, on site as well as virtual, the story generates a construct shaped by multiple and diverse narratives, from Māori myths and traditions and architecture history, through to contemporary urban subcultural references, personal anecdotes, information about facility, and project branding.

The aesthetic and style that may be experienced in the drawings, colouring and wording of Ōtautahi: An Origin Story are remarkably different from the design and language in the overall convention centre design presentations (Fig. 5 i-j). The colourful comic-inspired aesthetic, as well as the fact that the physical part of the project is mounted on the hoardings, instead creates a direct line of reference to the large quantity of graffiti, murals and street art that has emerged in Christchurch.

FIGURE 8 Artwork by Richard 'Popx Art' Baker (2011)

FIGURE 9 Artwork by Vexta (2015)

Street artworks have become prominent urban statements in Christchurch in the aftermath of the earthquake. (Photos:Lindsay Chan, Watch This Space - watchthisspace.org.nz)

Celebrated as a 'street art city', with mentions in the Lonely Planet guide, the subcultural art scene has become a principal tourist attraction (Woods, 2018; Anderson, 2019). Ōtautahi: An Origin Story is not a street artwork in its original form. Meticulously curated, permissioned and commissioned, and in its physical version printed on two slick exchangeable sets of PVC canvas, it fits rather into the category of advertising material – albeit with content of a more hybrid character.

As a drawing and a process, on site and online, *Ōtautahi: An Origin Story* does not actively engage in the actual *design* of the convention centre site, either in terms of the building or its surrounding landscape. On the other hand, as a representation, it goes beyond direct replication of the existing project drawing material. Rather, what is created may be described as a temporary, reconfigured and interwoven site narrative, positioning the final design signature in relation to selected relationships, stories and nested time perspectives, all unified by the graphic novel concept. Ōtautahi: An Origin Story functions as both a physical and a narrative buffer while the city is being transformed.

The Space of Time

The Southern Harbour in the Danish town of Køge is currently undergoing a major transformation from an active industrial harbour into a new, mixed living and working area. The development of the 15.2-hectare area, to be completed by 2030, is led by the consortium group Køge Kyst. The first step in the development plan is 'Phase Zero –The Life Before the City' that includes a cultural 'thread' with temporary urban spaces. It connects the city centre and harbour district. Phase Zero is a strategic testing and activation phase for generating attention and activity in the period before the construction commences. Moreover, the programme contains a set of strategic visions, plus a time schedule for the development and a final masterplan for the year 2030. The blueprint reveals a final status featuring three- to seven-storey building blocks, a clearly defined system of open spaces, and updated recreational facilities in the water and beach areas ((Køge Kyst 2011).

FIGURE 10 The Thread. The cultural pathway through the harbour transformation area in Køge. (Illustration: Køge Kyst,2015)


FIGURE 11 Aerial view of The Time of Space and its surroundings. The Time of Space and its large map are situated in the middle. (Illustration: Google Earth, 2021)

The temporary 'Phase Zero' spaces are located along 'The Thread' (Tråden) through the harbour area. This consists of a narrow pathway meandering through a mix of empty lots and still active businesses. Information signposts and panels about the transformation are distributed throughout the harbour. Five temporary urban spaces have been under development since 2011. These are, for the most part, located on sites which are intended for development in the later phase of the development, thereby reflecting more of a semi-temporary approach and character.

The temporary urban space known as Tidsrummet, *The Space of Time* (2014, BOGL/EVM Landskab), marks the entry point to the cultural path that then proceeds into the harbour area. On a vacant corner site, a 400 m² version of the masterplan has been hand painted on the ground. A dot accompanied by the text 'you are here' indicates the viewer's position on the map. A wavy line of thin metal poles with information panels mounted on them marks the edge of the square. Throughout the course of the project period, the information on these poles, which covers matters such as overall plans, event information, construction progress updates, archaeological discoveries and real estate promotion will be regularly renewed.

FIGURE 12 The masterplan 2030 at 1:100. The hand-painted plan outlines the square that creates the entrance to the cultural path through the harbour transformation area. (2015)
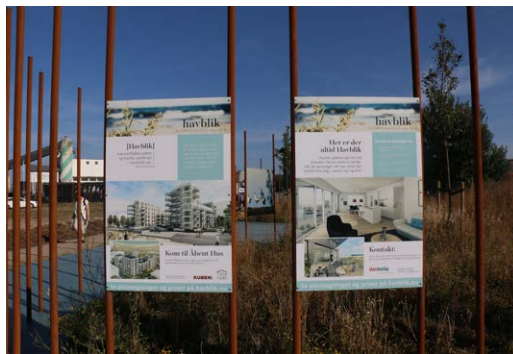
a

b

FIGURE 13 a-b.. The information poles. Panels mounted along the map-square feature a variety of information, from real estate promotion to archaeology. (2015)

a

b

FIGURE 14 a-b.. Information panel and play area. A large info panel and a playground area are located opposite the square (2015)

The square with the plan drawing acts as a forecourt and introduction not only to *The Space of Time* but also to the entire pathway that runs through the harbour. The final details of the painting were partly decided on site, based on sketches, and then hand painted on location. The graphic of the plan resembles a simple baseline plan with layers of streets, building blocks, trees and two types of green areas.

FIGURE 15 Sketches and final The Space of Time plan. The decision on the map concept was taken after a series of sketches had been made testing different decorative patterns. The map-square was then suggested as a good starting point for taking groups on guided tours across the harbour area, and as an important element of Køge Kyst's publicity work. (Illustrations: BOGL + EVM landskab, 2013)

The masterplan square – walking on the future

The map is a simple, rational masterplan display at a scale of 1:100. But it is also a fully designed urban square and scenography. While the masterplan is an abstraction, it is also very concrete and real, hand painted right in the middle of its own plan's content. It is an embodiment of a future place, but at the same time it is a physically situated element acting as a map, complete with 'you are here-dot' and directions to existing places in the vicinity. Similar to the referencing mentioned in *Ōtautahi: An Origin Story*, the map of Southern Harbour in 2030 is a type of hybrid projection, connecting different temporal perspectives. In this case, the temporal hybridity becomes evident through the interaction of content and context.

The plan is an abstraction, restricted to painted grey blocks, green areas, blue zones and dots representing trees at a scale of 1:100. The district as finally built will obviously not *be* the plan. According to its own plan, the painted masterplan itself will be gone by the time we reach the final state it projects. What communicates transformation and change is not so much the 2030 plan in itself, but the *difference* between this displayed future and the spatial setting of its location – the contrast between what is there and what is projected as an end result for the same setting – a temporal juxtaposition (Lynch, 1972, p. 173). Change and time perception are highlighted here, not by the representation and its properties, but by the very factors it cannot represent – the process and the 'in-between' period.

One of the basic relationships between the drawing and the spatial work it relates to, concerns the inherent translation, movement and oscillation between the drawing and the spatial situation and architecture. According to architect and historian Robin Evans, the 'recognition of the drawing's power as a medium turns out, unexpectedly, to be recognition of the drawing's distinctness from and unlikeness to the thing that is represented' (Evans, 1997, p. 154). In *The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention*, James Corner also points to a necessary otherness, a level of abstraction and difference, required in a map (Corner, 1999, p. 222). A tension arises, because while maps are projections they also reflect back into the space and territory (Ibid., p. 215).

In one way, the 2030 map is just a simple display of a *future* masterplan. But since it is located on site it also becomes a floor pattern, a scenography for the *present* – an intentional part of the urban design accommodating specific practices. Furthermore, additional stories and time perspectives are gathered around the square on the panels. These are multiple and exchangeable, featuring stories about archaeological discoveries, event documentation, real estate advertisements, and much more. Just as in the case of Ōtautahi: An Origin Story, the masterplan square exists in multiple forms. It is an on-site supergraphic, enacted through performative use, and it exists in mediated forms online. While not being a design tool that engages in the actual design of the future plan, it is used to shape and enact the space while waiting. While the ground mural will be gone when its promise has been fulfilled, during the transformation process itself it conveys a projected future to those looking at it.

FIGURE 16 *Playing the future. Children playing with miniature cars on the painted masterplan-square (Photo: Martin Håkan/CoverGanda.dk for Køge Kyst)*

Conclusion: Story sampling

Cultural geographer Giada Peterle suggests looking at comics 'as both finished graphic narrative products and "emergent" objects which, like maps, need to be engaged with to achieve their unfinished, transitory and in-becoming realization' (Peterle, 2017, p. 49). While this characterization does not apply to drawings *in situ*, it does offer a perspective from which to explore the interactive and transient character of the works presented. The aim of this exploration has been to tap into a field where we can understand on-site representations in relation to space creation, time conception, and storytelling. Both Ōtautahi: An Origin Story and the hand-painted map in *The Space of Time* point towards close relationships between large representations *in situ* and urban space creation. As presented, origin and authorship, the aesthetic references as well as the time perspectives in these supergraphics do not adhere to one tradition or profession, but emerge in an overlap between different urban actors, practices and storytelling tools. In both contexts, the on-site supergraphics do not seem to affect the planning, design and future layout of their respective sites. The large map in Køge shows a final masterplan, and its role on site is to present the plan to visitors in a playful way. The Ōtautahi: An Origin Story educates us about particular values that will be integrated into the convention centre design and tells stories across different timescales. The stories presented are not integrated in ideation, participation or design-testing as such. Rather, they take on an outsider role as communicative interfaces and narrative buffer zones, sampling stories about the past, the present and the future.

This article contributes to the discourse on representation and time through a discussion of larger on-site supergraphics as specific interfaces framing new relations between time conceptions, representation and urban transformation settings. It argues for recognizing these hybrid elements as distinct communicative and spatial on-site elements. This article sketches an emergent field in visual culture, urban planning and design that is in need of closer examination and critique. It invites an interdisciplinary discussion of the role of these interfaces, the actors and agendas they engage and represent, and of what this sphere of action can mean for the design and planning professions.

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