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Social Engineering

Can Society Be Engineered in the Twenty-First Century?

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Can Society Be Engineered in the Twenty-First Century?

This *Open* reflects on old and new forms of social engineering in relation to the urban and social space as well as to (communal) life within it. Is social engineering now a hollow ideal, or does it offer new, urgent perspectives?

Social engineering, in an objective sense, only refers to an analysis of the possibilities of constructing something. In relation to, for instance, sociopolitical reality, a strong faith in social engineering was an element of the utopias and idealized societies of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the course of the last century, however, social engineering also became a more specific, almost self-sufficient concept. As part of the modernist concept and as an expression of an optimistic faith in progress, there emerged, particularly in the Netherlands, an explicit discourse of social engineering* dealing with societal models to be realized (the welfare state) or forms of citizenship to be stimulated (the emancipated citizen), which were also mirrored by large-scale physical social engineering projects. As part of the modernist projects in the domain of urban design (the Bijlmermeer) and spatial planning (the impoldering of the Zuiderzee, the Delta Plan), social engineering also became a more specific, almost self-sufficient concept. Social engineering became associated with a social-democratically oriented faith in government intervention and with a belief in a nature that could be controlled by man.

Over the last several decades, there as been an apparent abandonment of social engineering and its ideals. Cultural critics such as John Gray attacked the general faith in social engineering and progress as a disastrous regression to the utopias of the Enlightenment, degenerating into a destruction of culture and nature and providing fodder for totalitarian thinking. At the same time, affluent Western countries experienced the bankruptcy of the welfare state, and developments such as privatization, globalization, migration, international terrorism and climate change generated steadily increasing scepticism about the social engineering of the world. In neo-capitalist postmodernity, or as culture philosopher René Boomkens called it, ‘the new disorder’, social engineering seemed a phantasm.

The question is, however, whether the philosophy of social engineering had really disappeared or whether it is being used by neoliberal phi-

losophy, using the procedures and instruments of the market and corporate management and targeting the individual. The model of the 'creative city', in which creativity and entrepreneurship are implanted in the urban fabric, seems a quintessential product of this 'neo-social engineering'. Other 'neo'- social engineering models might be the network society, the information society, the knowledge society, and of course the security state. Neo-social engineering, after all, seems to tap the logic of the police and the secret services as well: the security state is emerging as the most current and complex societal ideal of the moment, dystopian and disturbing as it may be considered from the standpoint of the old philosophy of social engineering, yet at the same time based on the utopian desire that liberty and security might be compatible – a desire that is also part of the neoconservative ideology of the Americans, which illustrates, as John Gray emphasized, the current right-wing philosophy of social engineering.

And then there is that other current obsession in which a belief in social engineering plays a role, namely 'the citizen': according to the Dutch 'Assimilation Delta Plan', a demonstration of contemporary biopower, legal newcomers from outside the European Union are transformed into national citizens, while the European Commission programme 'Citizens for Europe' wants to turn national citizens into European citizens. And all these citizens have to be 'active' citizens – illegals and refugees excepted.

Philosopher Lieven De Cauter, in his book *The Capsular Civilization*, emphasizes the impossibility of a non-social engineered society: 'It is not because total social engineering is dangerous that society should not be engineered, albeit relatively engineered. If society were not engineerable, it would be a natural process, or an accidental coincidence, or destiny. No politics can be conducted on this basis, and there is not a single historian who cannot demonstrate that society is engineered, not created, and moreover by a complex process of decisions.' De Cauter indicates that he believes in the countering force of a relative social engineering, thereby touching on current discussions about urban politics and social systems, in which theorists and designers are again asking whether social engineering is not a requirement of the human longing for organizational forms and intervention that vouchsafe a pleasant communal life. In its contribution, BAVO rightly asks to what extent relative social engineering can lead to an actual repoliticization and not remain mired in an ethical appeal without consequence. Are there new, emancipatory forms of a philosophy of social engineering, in which agency is pre-eminent, that might provide a tactical, political or activist response to dominant neoliberal and neoconservative tendencies?

* In Dutch-speaking countries the term 'maakbaarheid' is used, which literally means 'makeability'.

René Boomkens

The Continuity of Place

From the Socially Engineered City to the Global City

René Boomkens argues that the contemporary city transcends national social engineering. The city is being confronted by the unpredictable logic of a transnational publicness. Neither the marketing nor the politicization of the use of the city are adequate to deal with this. What is required is a phenomenology of the urban experience that does justice to the everyday and the unspectacular.

Whereas the city was once the basis for architecture, it now seems to have degenerated into a waste product and backdrop.

ZUS (Elma van Boxel and Kristian Koreman)

Twenty years ago, the city was rediscovered, by administrators, by scientists, by architects, by project developers and finally by activists, or to put it a better way, by active city dwellers. Not that no thought was given to the city before the late 1980s, and certainly not that our cities were not radically renovated and altered. What was rediscovered was what makes a city urban. Idealists would call it the essence of the city; pragmatists would talk about the historical specificity of the city – but that is irrelevant here. After all, what makes cities urban is inevitably derived from an ideal type, which itself refers to very specific exemplary situations. The ideal type of an urban lifestyle and culture is that of an open, diverse and concentrated ('dense') lifestyle, which forms the social foundation for contemporary democracy. The rediscovery of the city was, more specifically, renewed attention to typically urban places. The traditional functionalist discourse that had set the tone for decades both in politics and in spatial disciplines such as planning, geography and urbanism gradually made way for a more culturalist discourse in which anthropologists, historians, cultural geographers and philosophers played, and continue to play, an important role. Not surprisingly, this fresh attention to urbanity sometimes resonated with a culturally pessimistic undertone, a lament about the disintegration of a certain kind of urbanity. Five writers were often put forward to feed this cultural pessimism. In historical order, these were philosopher Hannah Arendt, who was cited as the champion of the idea of the polis; philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who in the early 1960s had warned about the decline of typically urban publicness; planning critic Jane Jacobs, who during the same period had warned about bureaucrats and planners who threatened the urban idyll of New York's Greenwich Village; cultural sociologist Richard Sennett, who in the mid-1970s saw the public urban life that had once flourished in cities like London and Paris in the eighteenth century withering under the influence of suburbanization and the 'tyranny of intimacy' emanating from the new mass medium of television; and finally the political scientist Marshall Berman, who saw the vitality of the modern, nineteenth-century city street being murdered by twentieth-century project developers following in the footsteps of Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse*.[1]

1. See, among others, Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958); Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt a/Main: Suhrkamp, 1990 (1962); Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961); Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977); Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1982).

It is not very difficult to paint these writers as nostalgists who were glorifying these obsolete forms of urbanity and publicness, from the agora of Ancient Greece via the salons and coffeehouses of the eighteenth century or the boulevards and arcades of the nineteenth. And this was in fact done repeatedly, but at the cost of the realization that these authors were also the forerunners of another rediscovery: that of a trend in political philosophy that had been abandoned, that of repub-

licanism, with its great emphasis on active citizenship.[2] In short, with the rediscovery of the urban place and urban publicness, the republican in the form of the active, outspoken citizen and urban dweller was also rediscovered. This rediscovery, however, was mainly an academic phenomenon, limited to intense debates among colleagues in political theory, historiography and philosophy, which found little resonance in the public debate itself. Or it would have to be that in the 1990s such themes as citizenship and the sense of civic responsibility came into vogue again for the first time in decades and were not immediately associated with bigotry or moral censorship. And indeed, this renewed academic interest for republicanism and the renewed public appreciation for 'the citizen' did have something in common, even if the academics emphasized mainly the freedom of the citizen or republican while in the public debate, on the contrary, all sorts of demands were made of the citizen and all manner of gradations of citizenship even emerged. What the academic and the public discourses shared was a defence of the value of citizenship, a value that took on the guise of a virtue, or as philosopher Michel Foucault called it, an ethos. In less spectacular terms: a certain 'lifestyle' or 'way of doing things'.[3]

2. Republicanism rooted in, among other things, the political philosophy work of Machiavelli and Rousseau, was revived by the ideas of Hannah Arendt (especially in her *On Revolution*, New York: Viking Press, 1983), which also filtered through into the philosophical work of Habermas and the cultural sociology of Sennett. The renewed interest in Arendt's work dates back to the 1980s, when philosophers such as Michael Walzer (*Spheres of Justice*, New York: Basic Books, 1983) and Richard Rorty (*Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1989) rehabilitated republicanism. Republicanism sees the state as a *res publica*, something that concerns all citizens. Freedom is not, as in liberalism, something that people win from the state, but something that instead only comes about by taking part in politics. In classical liberalism, equality is the premise for political participation; in republicanism, equality is the result of political participation. See also Gijs van Oenen, 'Over liberalisme, republicanisme en communitarisme', *Krisis, tijdschrift voor filosofie*, no. 31, June 1988, theme issue on republican politics: on passion, schemes and theatre, 7-26.

3. Michel Foucault, *Breekbare vrijheid. De politieke ethiek van de zorg voor zichzelf* (*Fragile Freedom: Political Ethics of the Care of the Self*) (Amsterdam: Krisis/Parrèsia, 1995).

This new republicanism thereby nestled as a sort of third way between the two dominant political discourses of the twentieth century, that of socialism (social democracy and communism) and that of liberalism (including various conservative parties that in practice differed little from liberalism). Until recently, socialism and liberalism were considered the two main ideological antagonists – the two absolutely opposite interpretations of the Enlightenment ideal of liberty or emancipation. The opposition between liberalism and socialism in fact dominated the global and most national agendas in the twentieth century, in particular the contrast between individual and collective and between market and government, and in a way that concealed the fact that both movements essentially shared a rationalist ideal of social engineering. The liberal ideal of social engineering is grounded in an optimistic faith in the perfectibility of the individual, as long as the individual is given the freedom over his or her person and property, while the socialist ideal of social engineering places every emphasis on the capacity of the state or the government, on behalf of the collective, to distribute national wealth as justly as possible. As the ideological dichotomy of market and government is being artificially maintained, even as by now virtually all socialists have become

liberals of a sort while the vast majority of liberals, diehards included, have in practice accepted various forms of government interference and government protectionism, the fact that the actual problem lies in the rationalist ideal of social engineering itself remains invisible. The ethos of the republican provides no solution to this problem (it would result in a third variant of the ideal of social engineering) but it does offer a possible way out, both from the obsolete government-market dilemma and from the trap of social engineering, the trap of the 'extreme make-over' presented by liberal and socialist ideologues time and time again. This way out can be very accurately illustrated by what I referred to above as the problem of the urban place, a place that, certainly in the Netherlands, bears the stamp of more than half a century of government interventions and that has been increasingly subjected to the 'discipline of the market' over the last two decades.

As I indicated above, this rediscovery of the urban place in fact involved a rediscovery of urbanity, in particular understood as urban publicness. We should consider the articulation of this urban publicness the permanent challenge of a modern and pragmatic republicanism that transcends the traditional pseudo-conflict between market and government. Publicness is anything but a simple product, or even a feature, of market operations, nor is it a unilateral function of the way a city is organized. In the last several years, cities and urban places have been increasingly subjected to a discourse that mainly understands (and subsequently reorganizes) these places as places of consumption. In this discourse, the city is understood as a (regional, national or global) stage for the experience economy, and successful urban places as the ideal facilitators of this economy. In the rest of this text I will argue that this discourse of consumption of urban places represents a step forward in comparison to the functionalism that was so characteristic of modernist urbanism and planning, because it provides more room for what I shall call 'the use' of urban places, a perspective that understands urbanity, first and foremost, as a specific way to experience, as opposed to a spatial organizational pattern or a system with certain explicit functions. This step forward, however, is often cancelled out by viewing the consumption of urban places unilaterally as being determined by market operations alone.

The Socially Engineered City as a National Project

The rich tradition of the Netherlands in the area of urban development and urban planning is summed up in five *Notas Ruimtelijke Ordening* (National Policy Documents on Spatial Planning) and in a whole series of technical terms that have since become part of everyday Dutch speech, such as *groeikernen* ('growth cores'), *woonerven* ('home zones') and even the cryptic *VINEX-wijken* ('VINEX neighbourhoods'), the residents of which probably have no idea that this term refers to the *Vierde Nota Ruimtelijke Ordening-Extra* (Fourth National Policy Document on Spatial Planning-Extra). Everyday Dutch also features a whole series of more negative or denigrating terms that place this rich tradition of urbanism in

a somewhat different light: *bloemkoolwijken* ('cauliflower districts'), *slaapsteden* ('dormitory suburbs') or *witte schimmel* ('white fungus'), while terms like *overloopgebieden* ('overflow areas'), *stedelijke velden* ('urban fields'), *de compacte stad* ('the compact city') and *gebundelde deconcentratie* ('bundled deconcentration') roll off the average city administrator's tongue. Both the rich variety and the expansion of planning terminology reflect the self-evident presence, even dominance of a long-term, consistent policy of spatial and urban planning, starting in the early twentieth century and especially and with even greater emphasis from the period of reconstruction following the Second World War. The socially engineered city, mainly a social project before the war, became a genuinely national project after the war, and seemed to be a self-evident part of a whole series of grand 'national projects', like the impoldering of the Zuiderzee and the Delta Project. Marshall Berman pointed out that in the USA too, the large-scale post-war city expansions and the construction of a new network of highways and parkways, projects that in many cases implicated the demolition of whole city districts, were applauded by residents themselves as an essential modernization. Just as in the Netherlands, Americans perceived this 'extreme make-over' of their cities as part of a great step forward, as the beginning of a new, more prosperous life in a brand-new urban environment. The engine of this future-oriented and optimistic transformation process was of course the automobile, which signified not merely ordinary mobility but primarily social upward mobility as well. Whereas the explosion of spatial and social mobility in the USA resulted in an unbridled suburbanization directed mainly by the market sector, the various National Policy Documents on Spatial Planning in the Netherlands seemed to be the government's attempts to regulate and even limit this process here.

This regulation and limitation were particularly expressed in the ideal of a 'compact city', which was also a trend that seemed to break with the modernist doctrine of the separation of functions, in which the purely analytical distinction between the four functions of habitation, work, recreation and traffic was actually translated into a spatial segregation of these functions. Both the increase in scale of the urban area and increased mobility, as well as the increasingly manifest issue of the environment, seemed to confirm the benefit of this separation of functions, and as a result not much of this compact city was actually realized. Arguments in favour of 'densification' (striving for a high building density), of mixing of functions and of a greater role for public transport, which together were supposed to make this compact city possible, in fact increasingly petered out in the face of the reality of the neoliberal policy of the government in the 1980s, in which privatization and deregulation were supposed to reduce the rising costs of the welfare state (that jewel of the ideal of social engineering). And it was precisely at this moment that interest in the urban place and urban publicness, with which I opened this text, revived. As I have already indicated to some extent, this interest, to a not insignificant degree, was a reaction to several decades of centralized urban development

and spatial planning, a reaction especially to the unintended side effects of the separation of functions – according to some even a frontal assault on the separation of functions as such. Yet it was certainly more than that. The renewed interest in urbanity and publicness was the product of a rather ambiguous situation, in which divergent processes crisscrossed one another, processes that sometimes reinforced one another and sometimes worked against one another. Within this wave of interest the following processes and tendencies resonated:

— the stubborn continuity of striving towards a compact city;
— a national government in a process of retrenchment, particularly in the domain of spatial planning and public housing;
— the complex of globalization processes (liberalization of the world economy, increased labour migration, the rise of a network of 'global cities');
— the process of 'delocalization' or 'deterritorialization' under the influence of new information and communication media;
— the rise of a global 'experience economy' (mass tourism, global mass media);
— the transformation of nation-states, national identities and national forms of citizenship.

Several of these processes overlap, but each represents real problems, or 'challenges', as they are called in neoliberal jargon, that are primarily reflected in the dynamics of urban reality. The most manifest and far-reaching consequence of this mishmash of process is the decline of the socially engineered city as a national political project, which was expressed, among other things, in the reception accorded to the final, fifth National Policy Document on Spatial Planning: it was considered obsolete before the ink was even dry . . .

The Use of the City

In several previous publications, partly following writers I have mentioned above[4] and partly in an attempt to develop a historical phenomenology of the urban experience and the urban place,[5] I have argued that publicness cannot be seen as a function of the modern city that can be isolated, and that, by extension, the urban public space cannot be seen as a functional zone, as was the norm in the modernist doctrine of the separation of functions. The ideal of the socially engineered city was not only based on the idea of the four fundamental functions of the city, but in addition on a form of spatial determinism as an instrument of policy. Even in the current 'approach' of the so-called *Vogelaarwijken* ('Vogelaar areas', after Housing Minister Ella Vogelaar) or *aandachtwijken* ('attention areas') or *prachtwijken* ('gem areas'), this spatial determinism still operates. Spatial determinism assumes that it is possible to conduct social policy through spatial interventions. This was (almost self-evidently) the basis of modernist policy in the area of urban development

4. In particular Jane Jacobs, Richard Sennett and Marshall Berman. See René Boomkens, *Een drempelwereld. Moderne ervaring en stedelijke openbaarheid* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 1998).

5. Here, too, I built on the work of others, in particular the philosophers Walter Benjamin and Gaston Bachelard. See René Boomkens, *De nieuwe wanorde. Globalisering en het einde van de maakbare samenleving* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 2006), 47-108.

and spatial planning at the time of the post-war construction of the welfare state: the light, air and greenery of the Bijlmermeer were supposed to make a 'new human being' possible. Every spatial intervention was assigned a label, as it were, noting its social functionality. But while the construction of a ring motorway displaced the pressure of mobility from the inner city to its outskirts and in this way had a positive impact on the traffic function of the city as a whole as well as on the habitation function of the inner city, the construction of a square does not lead in a comparable way to the reinforcement of urban publicness. Publicness is not an explicit function, but an implicit or indirect function, or to put it a better way, a transcendent quality of the particular use that is made of the urban space. It becomes manifest in and through that use, but it cannot be reduced to that use in the form of a simple causal relationship. Incidentally, this also applies to at least one of the four classic urban functions, habitation. Whereas for the other three functions, traffic, work and recreation, it can still be predicted to a certain degree that their realization coincides with their functionality, the same cannot be said of habitation. Accommodation or housing fits into a functionalist programme, habitation or liveability fall outside it. Habitation and publicness belong to an entirely different vocabulary – and here I deliberately use the term 'vocabulary' instead of 'discourse', because the latter term refers to an explicitly ordered and regulated way of speaking and acting, while 'vocabulary' belongs more to the world of the (everyday) use and (everyday) experience of urbanity and urban places.

There is no discourse of habitation, and one can barely speak of any discourse of urban publicness. Both, as transcendent qualities (or 'implicit functions'), belong to the domain of a phenomenology that interprets phenomena based on the attitude we adopt toward these phenomena in our everyday actions (or 'use'). Habitation and publicness require a historical and political phenomenology, because their experience can be called anything but an anthropological constant; they are permanently and even increasingly subject to historical transformations and discontinuities and to political and administrative interventions. In the work of such philosophers as Walter Benjamin and Henri Lefebvre and of a historian and anthropologist such as Michel de Certeau, we can distinguish the contours of a historical phenomenology of the urban experience and of the meaning of urban places or urban publicness.[6] For a political phenomenology of urban publicness and of the current condition of the urban dweller, or the citizen, historical references are lacking. In the work of contemporary anthropologists such as Jesús Martín-Barbero, Nestor García Canclini and Arjun Appadurai or a philosopher such as Gijs van Oenen, however, initial steps towards such a political phenomenology of publicness and citizenship can be found.

6. See in particular Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk* (Frankfurt a/Main: Suhrkamp, 1982); Henri Lefebvre, *Le droit à la ville* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1968); Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life, Vol. 3* (London/New York: Verso, 2005); Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien, I. Arts de faire* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 10/18, 1980).

An implicit part of the ideal of the social engineering of liberal and socialist theories and ideologies is the assumption that everyday social existence, in and of

itself, is an inert and passive quantity, and that science (the accumulation of knowledge) and politics (the rational exercise of power) are the active forces that bring about historical change and therefore can be held responsible for the legitimacy of this change. Benjamin, Lefebvre and De Certeau were the first to show that the meaning of a new technology, a new insight or a new political measure is not contained in the internal rationality of that technology, that insight or that measure, but is determined to a significant degree by the use made of it in everyday life. That use, in other words, remains outside the internal logic of the technology or measure in question. Or, conversely: the meaning of a new technology depends to a large extent on the way in which users of this technology 'appropriate' it. Yet in this very appropriation the user of the new technology simultaneously transforms his or her own perceptual environment. This insight is ideally suited to shed new – if rather stroboscopic – light on the use of the city.

The use of the city has emphatically extricated itself from the suffocating embrace of national social engineering and has become, more than ever, the object or work domain of a global distribution of images, messages and information. Imagination as such represents a new force in social existence: 'fantasy is now a social practice; it enters, in a host of ways, into the fabrication of social lives for many people in many societies.'[7] This is according to Arjun Appadurai, who with this aims to point out that the urban place or urban publicness features more than three dimensions: it is also fashioned by the fourth dimension of delocalized media space that has gradually taken on global forms. Thanks to this 'fourth dimension' the urban place and the public space acquire a supranational or transnational dynamic, which is not only supported by the global network of new and newer media, but is also reflected in that public space itself. It becomes visible in the way in which international fashion trends define the streetscape of cities, but also in a hodgepodge of clothing styles, languages and customs introduced by labour migrants or asylum seekers. The transnational character of urban publicness is also reflected in the distribution of international retail and restaurant chains and in a shadow economy, again supported by migrants, and finally by international show architecture inspired by 'city branding'. Latin American writers such as Martín-Barbero and García Canclini consider the transnationalization of the public sphere and of citizenship as the political dimension of the success of neoliberal economic globalization, the earliest and sharpest effects of which were felt in Latin America, with its weak nation-states: they describe transnationalization as a complex and contradictory narrative that was primarily developed by private, commercial mass media, especially television. García Canclini: 'Men and women increasingly feel that many of the questions proper to citizenship – where do I belong, what rights accrue to me, how can I get information, who represents my interests? – are being answered in the private realm of commodity consumption and the mass media more than in the abstract rules of democracy or collec-

7. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 53-54.

tive participation in public spaces.'[8]

If we understand the use of modern urban places as the spatial reflection of public life – and therefore as the basis for the functioning of modern democracies – this transnationalization of the way in which citizenship takes shape necessitates a reformulation of the meaning and the nature of modern urbanity. It no longer makes sense to view urban publicness as an autonomous sphere of disinterested intellectual and cultural exchange and confrontation, explicitly separate from the private sphere, and citizenship as something separate from (cultural) consumption that maintains a unilateral relationship with the national state and politics. For several decades now, the use of the city has been the work of a new, hybrid subject, the consumer-citizen, whose political and cultural attitudes and behaviours are explicitly influenced by the global technological reproduction of the popular imagination. In essence, this new condition or urban publicness reaffirms the traditional 'republican' analyses *à la* Arendt, Habermas or Sennett, which speak of a 'contamination' of public action by private interests (Arendt), of the monopolization of the public domain by multinational cartels (Habermas) or of the 'intimization' of the substance of the public sphere (Sennett). The analyses of such writers as García Canclini or Appadurai corroborate similar processes, but they offer an alternative diagnosis. What they, in a certain sense, make implicitly – and sometimes explicitly – visible is that the negative judgment expressed by Arendt, Habermas and Sennett about the state of publicness comes out of a unilateral interpretation of what I have heretofore called 'the use of urban places' or 'the use of the public domain'. This unilateralism is to a significant degree the product of an ahistorical magnification or reification of the model situations that form the background to their ideal type of publicness. Distance and deliberation are the crucial concepts that form the core of the public sphere for Sennett and Habermas, respectively. Sennett saw distance as the core of the theatrical character of the early-bourgeois public life in the coffeehouses, a distance that was required in that period of history in order to exclude, as it were, during the encounter in the coffeehouse, the actual social (class and urban) differences among individuals, but also their then highly significant religious differences. In the public sphere, in other words, one plays a role, for the duration of the encounter or confrontation, because all too significant social or ideological differences would already be too much of a burden for public life. This seems to confuse the general form of urban publicness with its historically specific content. The fact that public life, requires playing a role, a certain theatricality, which would be perceived as disruptive in the private domain, does not mean that this role is expected to avoid contents that would be crucial in the private sphere. This was a crucial code for the eighteenth-century public sphere, but in a society in which class differences and religious convictions play a less decisive role, such a code loses its significance. The Gay Parade that takes place annually on and along Amsterdam's

8. Nestor García Canclini, *Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 15. See also Jésus Martín-Barbero, *Communication, Culture and Hegemony* (London/Newbury Park/New Delhi: SAGE, 1987).

canals is a good example: an extremely theatrical event and an example of public action par excellence, and at the same time, in terms of content, a display of extremely private, even intimate preferences, practices and attitudes. In the same way, Habermas's identification of public action and of the public space with deliberation suffers from the magnification of an early-bourgeois culture of civilized salon conversations in which erudition was the quintessential social standard. The contemporary, transnational use of the city *as* a quintessential form of public action, in part shaped by global mass media, can no longer be judged in terms of distance or deliberation alone.

Between Continuity and Struggle

The contemporary use of the city transcends national social engineering but now faces a new and demanding monster: that of the intangible and paradoxical global imagination that has become the fourth dimension of the urban place. Rather than the instrumental rationality of an overly optimistic and clinical national planning compulsion, the unpredictable 'logic' (or the 'new disorder') of a transnational publicness has become the stake of the struggle for political and cultural hegemony. In comparison with the traditional national political game, we are dealing here with an unprecedented and as yet barely theoretically processed problem, that is still so 'open' that even post-political answers are conceivable. The classical republican discourse notwithstanding, urban places are not places of intensified debate, but primarily places of intensified cohabitation and conjunction of differences. This intensification defines the ethical and aesthetic quality of urbanity, which transcends any form of political social engineering and in a certain sense renders it redundant. The most beautiful dream of modernity was the dream of a world without a state, without politics. The perversions of this dream shaped the last century: liberalism, which championed the market, or property – with extreme exploitation and inequality as a result, and communism, which suggested that 'the people' could take the place of the state – with totalitarianism as a result. Somewhere between market and state, the city represents something like a concrete utopia of an open society that actually never fell prey to universalizing ideologies – simply because it already existed. The city has proven itself in the everyday use that has been made of it. That 'everyday use' of the city, which was the focus of the work of Benjamin and Lefebvre in particular, and which in the Netherlands was charted in more detail by such diverse anthropologists and urban sociologists as Talja Bolkland and Arnold Reijndorp,[9] among others, forms the model situation for our vision of democracy and of what, in our view, comes close to a decent society. Here I am very deliberately opting for a cautious and modest terminology, precisely to steer clear of two temptations: first and foremost the temptation of the triumphalism of market philosophy and its 'creative cities' that will change everything, a triumphalism effectively rebutted in various publications by Mike Davis, such as

9. See, among others, Arnold Reijndorp, *Stadswijk. Stedenbouw en dagelijks leven* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2004); Talja Blokland-Potters, *Wat stadsbewoners bindt. Sociale relaties in een achterstandswijk* (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1998).

Planet of Slums and *Evil Paradises*.[10] But the temptation of the other extreme also has to be resisted: that of the automatic pilot of 'resistance' or 'struggle'. We find that automatism especially in the almost religiously revolutionary books of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, or in Dieter Lesage's *Discourse on Resistance*, which leans heavily on Hardt and Negri.[11] Marketization and politicization of the use of the city both fail to do justice to the wealth and the power of precisely the everyday character and of the unspectacular continuity of the use we as consumer-citizens make of that city. Before intellectuals like Negri or Lesage can claim the necessity of resistance or struggle, an interpretation is required of the way in which all these consumer-citizens shape the continuity of urban publicness on a daily basis – and it is precisely this everyday aspect that is lacking in their 'discourses on resistance'. These discourses still rely too much on the idea of a frontal confrontation with 'power' and on a self-aware, rational citizenship – whatever the simultaneous emphasis placed on the fact that the centre of power of the empire cannot be located. The present consumer-citizen, however, looks entirely different; he or she derives his or her self-image from the global circulation and distribution of images and messages in the mass media. At any rate, he or she perceives his or her own public presentation in his or her own urban habitat through these images and messages. What this precisely means is not easy to answer. A challenging, albeit very impudent interpretation of contemporary citizenship was provided by philosopher Gijs van Oenen, who contrasted the classical 'interactivity' of the republican citizen with what he calls the 'interpassivity' of contemporary citizenship: 'The attempt to rehabilitate "public man" collides with a phenomenon that I refer to as interpassivity, following cultural philosophers Robert Pfaller and Slavoj Zizek. Involvement or engagement is delegated, outsourced. We would like to get involved, but we no longer believe that we can; therefore we ask others to get involved, on our behalf.'[12]

As a phenomenology of today's citizenship and of contemporary collective life in an urban environment, Van Oenen presents a whole series of persuasive examples of this 'interpassivity', examples that, without exception, make it crystal-clear to us that the self-aware and outspoken citizenship that was traditionally associated with public life in democratic societies is definitively a thing of the past. Van Oenen provides no clear explanation, however, of this interpassivity. References to the mediatization of our lives and to the flexibilization of the labour process place Van Oenen's interpassivity in the line of the traditional Marxist doctrine of alienation, but the whole idea of the outsourcing of involvement also alludes, unintentionally, to concepts like simulacrum and hyperreality, used by French sociologist Jean Baudrillard to come to grips with a social reality mediatized in a multitude of ways. And indeed, what Van Oenen and

10. Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London/New York: Verso, 2006); Mike Davis and Daniel Bertrand Monk (eds.), *Evil Paradises: Dreamworlds of NeoLiberalism* (New York/London: The New Press, 2007).

11. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Amsterdam, Van Gennep, 2002); Dieter Lesage, *Vertoog over verzet. Politiek in tijden van globalisering* (Antwerp/Amsterdam: Meulenhoff/Manteau, 2004).

12. Gijs van Oenen, 'Het nieuwe veiligdom. De interpassieve transformatie van de publieke sfeer', *Open*, 2004, no. 6, 7.

Baudrillard share is not the explanatory power of their arguments, but the evocative and robust magnification of diverse crucial dimensions of our everyday habitat. In that sense, the notion of 'interpassivity' is a brilliant invention. It expresses and represents our everyday experience as consumer-citizens who, through various media, feel extremely connected to the tribulations of the world – in fact feel compelled to feel connected, which in a certain sense is a reaffirmation of a traditional republican virtue – yet at the same instant 'outsources' that involvement to others, to a charitable organization, a media event or a 'campaign' in which the consumer-citizen need not participate in person, because this 'campaign' has already been organized and stage-managed.

Interpassivity and mega-involvement: wonderful terms that perfectly express the fate of the contemporary urban dweller and citizen. They raise significant doubts about the potential for resistance that Hardt and Negri, or Lesage presume of the citizen and about any excessively optimistic vision of the social engineering of society, but in no way do they refute the possibility of expressing and if necessary dramatizing the continuity of a local imagination, or the dream of a very specific, very particular urbanity. Interpassive citizens indeed hardly look like the dreamed subjects of modernity Habermas had in mind, but we should not blame citizens for that. If we had a complaint, it would be directed at the endless revival performance of the stage play of social engineering, this time less aimed at the social-democratic champions of the welfare state but rather at the neoliberal champions of the win-win situation, of the unbridled flexibility of human beings as factors in an otherwise unpredictable and global economic success story. There is little to counter that story – only the continuity of our own urban place, and that is indeed constantly under pressure and at risk.

Marc Schuilenburg

The Dislocating Perspective of Assemblages

Another Look at the Issue of Security

Marc Schuilenburg addresses the issue of governance as an essential aspect of the philosophy of social engineering. Via the insights and concepts of Foucault and Deleuze he goes in search of a more adequate understanding of the link between social reality and governance. Discussion on this should no longer be fixated on the dichotomy between private and public, says Schuilenburg. Society, after all, is not an immutable, static quantity; it has a fluid character that requires thinking in terms of surveillance 'assemblages'.

During a visit to Canada in April 2008, American Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff announced to his audience that fingerprints are not part of a person's personal data: 'A fingerprint is hardly personal data because you leave it on glasses and silverware and articles all over the world; they're like footprints. They're not particularly private.'[1] A reaction was not long in coming. It came from Canada's privacy commissioner, Jennifer Stoddart. 'Fingerprints constitute extremely personal information for which there is clearly a high expectation of privacy.'

1. http://thinkprogress.org/2008/04/16/chertoff-fingerprints (consulted on 7 June 2008).

The debate about where the private begins and the public ends has a long history. It goes back to the French Revolution. The end of the *Ancien Régime*, symbolized by the beheading of Louis XVI in 1793, ensured that the sovereignty of the monarch made way for the will of the people. No one had the exclusive right to rule in their own name any longer. Two spheres were created to express what was understood by 'life'. In the private domain, the state was to leave the individual in peace. Beyond the threshold of the home, everyone was free to espouse his or her own desires and opinions. In the public domain – the *agoras* of the cities – however, the individual was a citizen who was to set aside his desires and opinions for the common good.

The separation between public and private worked quite nicely for a couple of centuries. Now, however, it seems its best days are over. Municipal intervention teams, made up of inspectors from social services, energy suppliers, representatives of housing corporations and other organizations, show up unannounced at the homes of residents with problems. This campaign is called 'beyond the front door'. Various technologies (security cameras, data mining, RFID chips in clothing, DNA tests) are employed to increase the perception of security in the broadest sense of the word. 'Police-like' responsibilities, such as the security of semi-public areas like shopping centres, airports and residential areas, are increasingly being carried out by commercial actors. These practices and measures seem very diverse, yet they have a lot in common. They are all employed in the same processes of the prevention of perceived risks. Sadly, debate on this new method of governance has been hijacked by the catch-all word 'privacy'. When we look at the changes in the issue of security without bias, however, we see a more fundamental problem emerge. In all sorts of areas, there is a certain overlap between public and private practices. These overlaps or convergences are never stable or static. They are not sharply demarcated and they are constantly changing: in form, in reach, in composition. In order to uncover the 'ground' of this mobility or fluidity, we need a different ontological and epistemological premise than the private/public dichotomy outlined above, upon which modern society is supposedly based.

In this article I intend to approach the fluid character of social reality from two directions. In the first place I want to make a contribution to the explication of the relationship between gov-

ernance and social reality. Relying on Michel Foucault's analyses of power I shall first attempt to go one step further into his conceptual world. His analyses of disciplinarian practices in which the individual is shaped by all manner of power operations are my starting point. Via the work of Gilles Deleuze, and in particular his concept of 'assemblage', I wish to give greater depth to the link between the social and governance. By relating this concept to security regimes in our immediate environment, I shall show that this mobility should not be confused with 'chaos' or a 'new disorder'.[2] And this leads directly to the second objective of this article. When we approach the social based on the concept of assemblage, we see countless hybrid connections emerge, which enter into unexpected relationships with one another. Which relationships are we then talking about? How do these attain a certain consistency or coherence? Through these questions I ultimately aim to outline a number of rough characteristics of how the issue of governance has come to circle ever closer around social reality.

2. See for instance René Boomkens, *De nieuwe wanorde. Globalisering en het einde van de maakbare samenleving* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 2006).

Discipline and Biopolitics

Foucault defined the eighteenth century as a disciplinarian society, in which power was exercised in a way different from the sovereign society that had preceded it. In the sovereign society, absolute power rested with the monarch. A violation of the law was interpreted as an assault on his body. With the shift from a sovereign state to a disciplinarian society, oppression, negativity and a vertical structure, hallmarks of what Foucault calls sovereign power, are replaced by anonymous and horizontal power relationships. These branch out as a network and penetrate the entire societal domain. The consequence is that the exercise of power can no longer be attributed to a person ('the monarch') or to a rule ('the law'). With his assertion that power is never exclusively vested in 'things' or in 'persons', that we must hence learn to think of it in terms of prohibition and oppression, Foucault wants to make clear that power, in and of itself, is nothing. It has no essence, Deleuze emphasizes in his monograph about Foucault's work. Power is purely a relationship between forces, which essentially means that it has not been formalized.[3] It is only produced in the relationships between different points. In this way, power relationships (virtual, unstable, unlocalizable and molecular) define the possibilities or probabilities of the actual interactions in social reality. The actualization of these differential relationships, Foucault shows in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), unfolds in the institutions of the disciplinarian society, in its schools, prisons, factories, hospitals, army barracks. This actualization is not a unilateral process, but rather the result of a whole series of mutually reinforcing effects whereby each separate institution integrates the power relationships of the diagram of the social domain in its own way and in its own environment (alloca-

3. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 37.

tion, classification, consolidation, normalization, etcetera).

Unlike in the sovereign society, the realization that the individual can be socially engineered emerges. Building on the humanist insights of the Enlightenment, various techniques are applied in the separate institutions to teach socially desirable behaviour. The consequences of this are most visible in the army. In the seventeenth century, the soldier is still described as someone one recognizes by his courage or fighting spirit. This changes, however, in the eighteenth century. From a meaningful body that radiates energy and honour, the body of the soldier is reduced to a cog in the machine. The soldier is shaped by exercises in which he learns to hold his head high and his back straight and to move in a uniform manner. Through corrective exercises, which are aimed at generating specific and measurable effects, the soldier is furnished with a coherent identity. This disciplining of the body does not take place only in army camps. Discipline-oriented techniques are also applied in other societal institutions: the prison, the hospital, the school and the workplace. And simply because its disciplinarian effect is equivalent to those of a series of other institutions with which the individual is confronted throughout his life, the army can be compared to the factory, which in turn has everything in common with a prison. Without interruption, the individual in fact moves from one institution to the other: from the family to the school, from the school to the factory, and so forth. We are dealing with a continuous progression in a sequence of separate spaces through which the institutions continually refer to one another. At school you are told you are no longer at home. At work you hear 'you're not at school anymore'.[4]

4. Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 177.

The picture of society that is presented here is a succession of separate spaces, whereby the individual moves from point to point as though there were constantly something new to be added to his life. To emphasize this transformation, Deleuze and Guattari speak of moving in a segmented or striated space.[5] With this they indicate that space in a disciplinarian society was above all an oriented space, that is to say an expression of a progressive perception of time in which the individual constituted himself as a subject and emancipated himself with an eye towards a final state to be attained. In reading *Discipline and Punish*, however, one is immediately struck by the fact that nowhere in it does Foucault address the question of which power relationship acts on the bodies in the spaces 'between' the institutions of modernity. In other words, what forms or categories of power continue to operate in the open space of cities? For this we must go back to two texts by Foucault from the first half of the 1970s. In them he takes a cautious step towards an explanation in which the public space increasingly becomes the domain of an effort towards regulation or control of life. In these texts he refers to biopolitics, a form of power that emerges in the second half of the

5. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 474-500.

eighteenth century and regulates social life from the inside out. With the concept of biopower he derives from this, Foucault has a different type of power operation in mind than disciplinarian power. Whereas discipline is directed at the individual body, biopower concentrates on the populations. The object of political strategies is not the social engineering of the individual body, but the body as a type. The term 'biopolitics', which would be addressed in greater detail in *The Will to Knowledge* (1976), first appears in the lecture 'La naissance de la médecine sociale' which Foucault delivered at the State University of Rio de Janeiro in October 1974. 'For capitalist society, it was bio-politics, the biological, the somatic, the corporal, that mattered more than anything else. The body is a bio-political reality; medicine is a bio-political strategy.'[6] Through population control biopolitics has a direct relationship with bare life itself. The population is no longer an abstract quantity, nor does it coincide with the number of inhabitants in relation to a habitable territory. On the contrary, it manifests itself, in Foucault's words, 'as an object of surveillance, analysis, intervention, modifications, and so on'.[7]

6. Michel Foucault, 'La naissance de la médecine sociale', in: *Dits et écrits, 1954–1988* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 207-228.

7. Michel Foucault, 'La politique de la santé au XVIIIe siècle', in: ibid., 18.

In the process, the conditions under which people live and the way their bodies function as the bearers of biological processes (public health, births and deaths, average lifespan, population growth, education) become part of the 'governance' of society. Foucault expresses this method of governance with the neologism *gouvernementalité*. In it the ratio is not predicated on the 'control' of the population of which Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1532) was exemplary, but on the 'management' of relations among people. That is to say, the objective is the optimization of all those aspects of life that promote the welfare of the population as a whole.

Everything is Private and Everything is Public

In the article 'Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de controle', Gilles Deleuze uses the image of an open space to analyse how another diagram is slowly replacing the effects of the disciplinarian society. He argues that we are at a point where the disciplinarian society is slowly shifting towards a control society, a term Deleuze borrows from William Burroughs, author of the famous novels *Junkie* and *Naked Lunch*.[8] In a 1972 interview with *Penthouse*, Burroughs alludes to this new mechanism of power: 'The point is that the means of control are much more efficient now. We have computers . . . So the possibilities for control are much more powerful than they've ever been.' And in 1959's *Naked Lunch* he writes, 'The logical extension of encephalographic research is biocontrol; that is control of physical movement, mental processes, emotional reactions and apparent sensory impressions by means of bioelectric signals injected into the nervous system

8. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, op. cit. (note 4), 177-182; Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness. Texts and Interviews 1975-1995* (Los Angeles/New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 321.

of the subject.'[9] In an extension to this, Deleuze observes that the closed structures of the disciplinarian society are gradually losing their hold. The institutions of the disciplinarian society have passed their sell-by date. The walls of schools, barracks, factories and prisons are tumbling down. There is a generalized crisis in the domain of every form of confinement. The consequences of these changes are visible everywhere. Through electronic surveillance, whereby the inmate serves out his sentence outside the walls of his cell, the prison has expanded to the immediate surroundings of the inmate's home. Through home care, another institution, the hospital, is transposing its activities to the habitat of the patient. Even the transition from school to work has become diffuse. At work people are constantly expected to continue to learn through various trainings and courses. At the same time, the laptop is taken home so that people can keep working over the weekend. The significance of these transitions lies in the perspective they provide on the relationship between governance and the social order. Simply formulated, control is not discipline. Or, as Deleuze remarked in an earlier article: 'You don't confine people with a highway. But by making highways, you multiply the means of control. I am not saying this is the only aim of highways, but people can travel infinitely and "freely" without being confined while being perfectly controlled.'[10]

9. William Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1959), 162.

10. Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, op. cit. (note 8), 322.

Deleuze's argument that control defines the relationships of the social sphere leads to the objection that it is insufficiently clear in what way this form of power genuinely differs from the two eighteenth-century poles of discipline and biopower. Aside from the fact that control also played a fundamental role in the sovereign and disciplinarian societies, the examples in 'Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de controle' do not provide a picture different from that of Foucault's disciplinarian analyses of power. We are still dealing with techniques that turn individual bodies into productive, efficient and obedient labourers. All things considered, nowadays the method used on motorways to indicate that a driver has committed a violation ('You are driving too fast', 'Maintain sufficient distance') has no other purpose than the immediate correction of the driving behaviour. Yet Deleuze undeniably has a point when he links spatial transformations with changes in social reality itself. Whether we define this development in terms of 'risk' (Ulrich Beck in *Risk Society*, 1992), 'security' (David Garland in *The Culture of Control,* 2001) or 'ICT' (Manuel Castells in his network trilogy *The Information Age,* 1996), it is clear that the term 'environment' has become a very broad concept in our present society. In particular, Deleuze shows that the striated space of the disciplinarian society is making way for a smooth or open space. Whereas the disciplinarians techniques operated in closed and fixed spaces (walls, borders, gates), each with its specific function, the control society operates through constantly changing networks or open spaces.

Mobility, flexibility and acceleration are the new qualities of these environments.

An open space is no simple concept. The word 'open' can give rise to all sorts of misunderstandings, misunderstandings related to form, trajectory and unity. An open space differs from a striated space in three particulars. In the first place in its form: the surface of a striated space is delimited and enclosed; special spaces are assigned to categories of persons (school pupils, patients, prisoners). An open space has no definite boundaries or a privileged form. It can be extended in any direction and is confined only by a horizon that shifts as the audience moves. For this reason, we can no longer speak of an absolute 'inside' or 'outside'. Even concepts like 'distance' or 'opposite' lose their classical meanings here. In the second place, the relationship between point and line is inverted. In a striated space a line lies between two separate points. As we have seen, each of these points (school, factory, hospital) has its own customs. In an open space the point lies between two lines, which implies that the separate points are subordinate to the trajectory that continues on a horizontal plane or field. An open space stimulates and orders separate dimensions without turning them into a totalizing whole. There is only a continual variation of form and size. In the third place, the nature of the line differs. Whereas in a striated space dimensional lines and closed intervals can be distinguished, in an open space we are dealing with directional lines and open intervals. An open space realizes itself in what it causes to disappear. That does not make it a homogeneous or undivided space, as though there were no segments or ruptures within it. Multiple spaces can be present in an open space, just as multiple languages exist in one language. We should only understand that the ruptures between the spaces are no longer absolute, as they are in a striated space in which one must pass through all sorts of physical barriers (gates, booms) in order to enter. An open space, in and of itself, always has multiple meanings. Or to put it another way, you can be private in a public space and public in a private.

'It's a Mall World'

An open space is a continuum or surface network of different dimensions with their own details, speeds and effects. To enter into an open space means to enter into local and unstable environments, environments that are constantly changing in reach and size, in sound and colour, in mood and intensity. If we take this odd mixture, which is becoming the domain of a stronger and also more direct governance apparatus with health and security as its most important parameters, as a representation of social reality, we see, in the words of Deleuze, a 'very strange world' unfold. In an allusion to Leibniz, he speaks of a Harlequin suit or a patchwork quilt.[11] The latter is a peculiar fabric, full of colours, contrasts and asymmetrical shapes, in which countless bits of cloth are held together by a tangle of loose threads. Its multiplicity is dif-

11. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, op. cit. (note 5), 476-477; Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogen* (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1991), 90.

ficult to apprehend and define from one exclusive angle, as is usual in the social sciences, where abstract quantities define inextricable entities that exist by the presumption of a common order. Just think of container concepts like 'risk society', 'culture of control', 'insurance state', 'post-disciplinarian society', 'security society', 'exclusion society', 'prevention culture', 'spectacle society', and so on. This kind of thinking is still trapped in a representational logic that does not acknowledge social reality as such. For this reason, it cannot be sufficiently emphasized, says Deleuze, that a society is constantly escaping in all directions, never stops slipping away and, he asserts in an interview, is flowing everywhere.[12] From this standpoint, the main emphasis is no longer on abstract quantities, but on the fluid character of social reality itself.

12. Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, op. cit. (note 8), 280.

What does this mean in terms of governance? Or expressed another way, in what way do all manner of 'hybrids', to use one of Bruno Latour's terms, emerge in our environment, whose objective is the prevention of potential risks? If we look at recent writings on the imbedding of the issue of security, we find discussions of 'surveillance assemblages'.[13] This term expresses the fact that surveillance is driven by an uncontrollable need to bring together actors, practices, technologies and information systems and to integrate them into larger entities. These can be insurance companies, national security, multinationals, social security, shopping centres, and so on. All these separate practices have a distinct style of operation, use their own information systems, apply specific definitions of normality and deviating truths, and all these characteristics are aimed at making a specific public (or to put it a better way, 'publics') visible. It would therefore be inaccurate to identify this public with an individual or a population.[14] Each medium creates its own users. This is about the 'public *of* an insurance plan', the 'public *of* a shopping centre', the 'public *of* a policy measure'. Because of the growing influence of information and communication technologies on contemporary society and the organization of the urban space in particular, this new entity does not manifest itself in a demarcated space ('school' or 'national state'), but rather actualizes itself in an open environment in which people encounter one another differently and are monitored in a different way. To put it a better way, surveillance is incorporated into the movement of a public through an open space.

13. K.D. Haggerty and R.V. Ericson, 'The surveillant assemblage', *British Journal of Sociology* (2000), 51, 4, 605-622; Ed Romein and Marc Schuilenburg, 'Are you on the fast track? The rise of surveillant assemblages in a post industrial age', *Architectural Theory Review* (2008), 13, 2, forthcoming.

14. See also Mauricio Lazzarato, 'Life and the Living in the Societies of Control', in: M. Fugslang and M. Sørensen (eds.), *Deleuze and the Social* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 171-190.

Take the example of a Sunday football match. At 1:29 p.m. I close my front door behind me. The lady who lives across the street looks at me inquisitively. To increase local security she's signed up with *Burgernet* ('Citizen Net'), a police initiative to enrol citizens in the investigation of crimes. The police left a message on her answering

machine yesterday with the description of a man who has broken into several cars in the area. If my neighbour notices anything she can call a direct number, whereupon the dispatcher sends the nearest police officers to the location. On the way to the neighbourhood shop to quickly buy a pack of gum, I am watched by a network of intelligent cameras that link my face to a database of photos of recidivists, comparing me to millions of people in 60 seconds. It is now 1:35 p.m. The neighbourhood shop, in turn, is part of the *Collectieve Winkelontzegging* ('Collective Shop Ban') project. This is an initiative of shop owners and shop-owners' associations to combat trouble on their own. If someone behaves inappropriately in the shop, be it shoplifting, or being rude to the staff, this person can be banned. This ban applies not just to the neighbourhood shop, but to all the other shops in the city centre. By now it is 1:41 p.m. With a pack of Sportlife in my pocket I press my public transport chip card against the scanner of the turnstile at the metro station at 1:47 p.m. 'Easy, fast and secure' – these are the marketing terms printed on the chip card. Thanks to a unique identification code, all my travel details are recorded in a central database. This provides a complete picture of the distances I travel by metro, bus, tram and train. When I arrive at the stadium I show my season ticket to the stewards who are responsible for order and security in the stands. It is now 1:56 p.m.

In less than half an hour, from my front door to the football stadium, I have passed five difference surveillance assemblages. At first glance we move autonomously and without friction through the same open space. Yet while this environment gives the suggestion of being continuous, it is actually populated by so many different assemblages that any openness or smoothness is merely illusion. Most of the time the unique interplay of concealments and revelations remains invisible to the moving public. This changes only when the public transport chip card is blocked, facial markers match details in the shop-owners' association register, or the stadium stewards have been notified of the rather turbulent football history of a particular person. While each 'island' has its own values, its own logic and principles, we should not imagine that these assemblages have nothing to do with one another. These environments can just as easily ignore or exclude one another – sometimes they even turn against one another, but more often they reinforce one another, overlap or converge into new assemblages. I have confined myself to a few examples. Private institutions are getting more and more access to information from government departments, and vice versa. Organizations and institutions such as internal revenue departments, police, social services, supermarkets and hospitals also exchange information in order to chart life. In addition, government personnel are increasingly working for private parties. The largest shopping centre in Europe, the MetroCentre in Gateshead, England ('If we don't have it, you don't want it'), is equipped with the latest surveillance electronics, but that has not kept its management from increasing

security within its walls by hiring police officers from the Northumbria Police. Not only does the police still enjoy great symbolic power and authority, but this also gives the shopping centre's security personnel access to the information sources and intelligence (crime-related data) of the police force.[15]

15. Adam Crawford, 'Networked Governance and the Post-Regulatory State? Steering, Rowing and Anchoring the Provision of Policing and Security', *Theoretical Criminology* (2006), 10, 4, 449-479.

In short, information travels back and forth between practices over all sorts of complex networks; in one assemblage citizens turn out to be policemen, in another assemblage policemen are in the employ of private security firms. Unfortunately, research into the splintering of security measures usually focus on one environment, for example *Burgernet*, camera surveillance or private security. Research that is not limited to a single environment, but rather outlines how separate elements affect different practices, is scarcely undertaken. As a result, too little attention is paid to the fact that a surveillance is never a starting point or an end point, but always a middle, literally a medium in which elements from all sorts of heterogeneous practices interconnect. Instead of seeing in these assemblages a simple curtailment of the freedom of movement or an invasion of privacy, we must try to understand its ontological and epistemological premise. For one element of an assemblage can break away, to a relative extent, and go on to function in another assemblage. It can be taken out of one assemblage, concludes Manuel DeLanda in *A New Philosophy of Society*, and be incorporated in another context.[16] In turn, this context is formed by new variables, unforeseen interactions and other outcomes. Order and unity are not provided a priori; they form at a secondary level, from the relationships within the assemblages. This still does not answer the question of the consistency of an assemblage. In other words, in what way are heterogeneous elements kept together in a surveillance assemblage? Is there a specific 'causality', and if so, how can we explain it?

16. Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2006), 10.

Content and Expression

The 'assemblage' concept is central to Deleuze and Guattari's ambitious work *A Thousand Plateaus*, the second part of *Capitalism & Schizophrenia*. The French word for assemblage (*agencement*) expresses the heterogeneous and mobile nature of social reality. *Agencement* is terminologically related to the Latin *agens*, which means 'to guide' of 'to set into motion'. This guiding principle (*agens*) expresses a process of 'arranging', 'organizing' or 'connecting'. But the guiding force of this process never operates outside an assemblage. An assemblage has its own force of action. It is something active. This self-organizing activity cannot be reduced to its elements; it lies instead in the relationships between the elements that make up an assemblage. Unlike a closed entity, an assemblage operates in an open combination of heterogeneous elements.

Deleuze and Guattari distinguish two dimensions that give an assemblage order and cohesion, in other words a basis from which to operate: the horizontal and the vertical dimension. The horizontal dimension is formed by the relationship between expression and content. By the content aspect of an assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari mean the interaction or organization of qualities among objects, bodies and animals in a concrete practice. They call these practices non-discursive formations. These can be institutions like a school or a prison, but also political events (the French Revolution, 9/11), economic practices (insurance systems) and (social) processes (exclusion). By the expressive aspect they mean the totality of signs that links these formations. This can include linguistic expressions (symbols, words) and non-linguistic expressions, such as the bodily postures or clothing of persons. For clothing is more than simply something to keep the body warm. It is also used to express a particular function (police officer, steward), indicate a social status (a three-piece suit) or works as a form of self-styling (football supporter).

For the foundations of the difference between the two aspects, they base their argument loosely on the work of Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev, who in Deleuze's terms, has developed a Spinozaesque theory of language in which content and expression do not rely on a predominant signifier. Expression, Deleuze and Guattari argue in *A Thousand Plateaus*, does not coincide with a signifier. At the same time, content is not the same as the signified. There is no equivalence or analogy – in the sense of 'description' or 'correspondence' – between the two. Content and expression function relatively independently from each other. Relatively, because they only exist through the relationships that take place between them. In no way are content and expression directly or absolutely dependent on each other. In this Deleuze and Guattari reject the supposed synthesis between content and expression. Take the statement 'I swear'. This takes on a different meaning when it is spoken by a pupil to a teacher, by a minister taking the oath of office, or by a defendant during a trial. For this reason, it is not enough to observe that only the setting (school, parliament, courtroom) changes. That would suggest that the statement remains essentially the same. Not only do the elements or 'the nature' of the separate settings differ, but the statement itself takes on a different expression.

A rather fundamental distinction, it seems. Yet the attention of the social sciences turns sporadically to everyday interactions among people in divergent formations. Criminology, for instance, seems to nurture a structural distrust of the incidental character of everyday reality. In order to safeguard the sustainability and homogeneity of the social, natural forms of expression (sensation, gossip, frustration, kick) and so-called coincidental elements (the role of women in organized crime) are seldom investigated. These are largely kept outside 'the order of the discourse', to quote Foucault. Criminology prefers to concentrate on patterns or expressions that can be labelled as rational and that are

the product of abstract quantities such as 'the economy', 'the culture', or 'the criminal organization'. In this it builds on a structure of general laws that can be applied to individual elements. In this reduction of social reality to a static-free order, there is only room for linear processes and predictable behaviours.[17]

17. See also Patrick Van Calster, 'Re-visiting Mr. Nice. On organized crime as conversational interaction', *Crime, Law and Social Change* (2006), 45, 4-5, 337-359.

According to Deleuze, however, expression is in no way the logical consequence of content, in the sense that without content no expression can exist. Or to put it another way, there is no causal link between content and expression. If there are notable similarities, this is only because these are the consequences of the relationships between content and expression in an assemblage. Similarities must therefore not be seen as the cause of production. This confuses process and product, argues Brian Massumi.[18] Content and expression are independent processes that operate separately from 'the incident' or 'the case' to which they refer. In this Deleuze and Guattari are going quite far. Not only do they call content and expression two 'non-parallel formalizations', but these also have their own form and substance that are again entirely heterogeneous, and sometimes even multiple forms and substances.[19] From this standpoint there is no final form that still ensures a connection between content and expression.

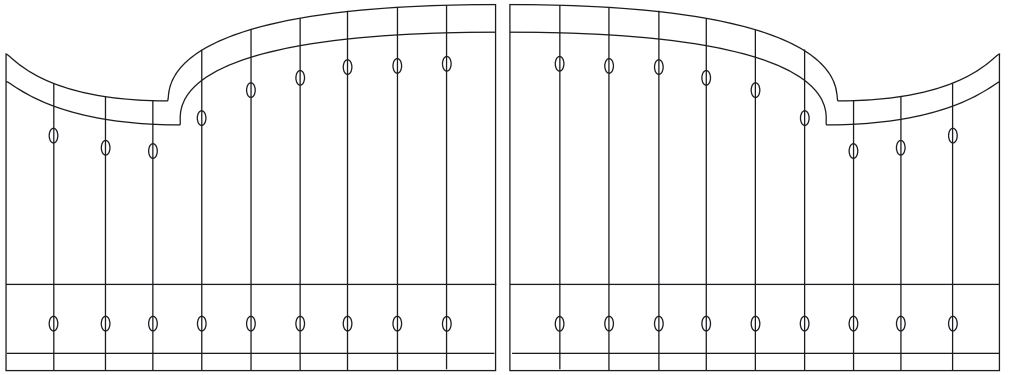
18. Brian Massumi, *A Shock to Thought: Expression After Deleuze and Guattari*, (Londen: Routledge, 2002), 8.

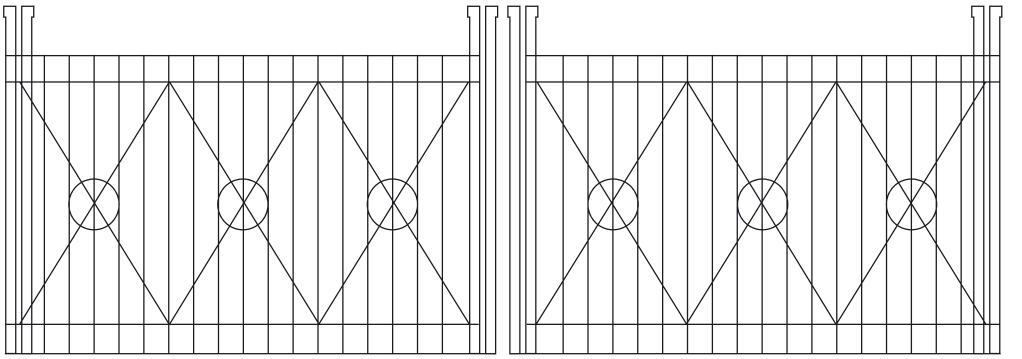
19. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, op. cit. (note 5), 86; Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, op. cit. (note 8), 242.

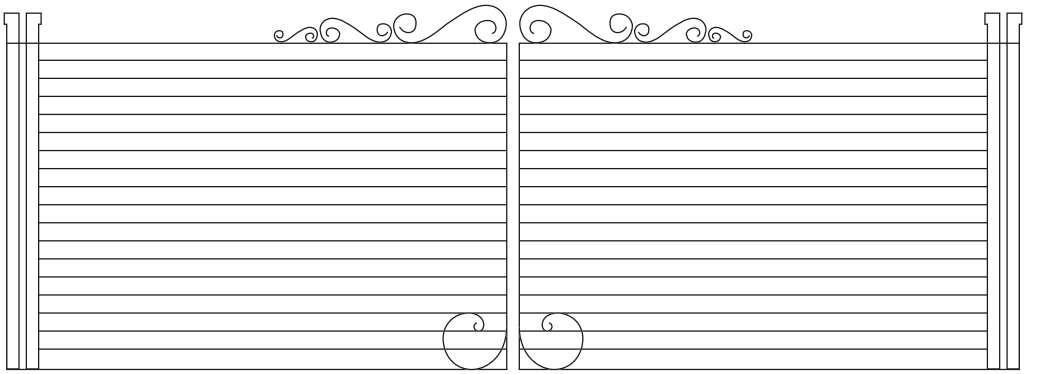
Between content and expression there is only a process that links the two forms. This process itself has no form. Deleuze speaks of a zone of indiscernibility, a play of forces, which he characterizes as pure intensity.

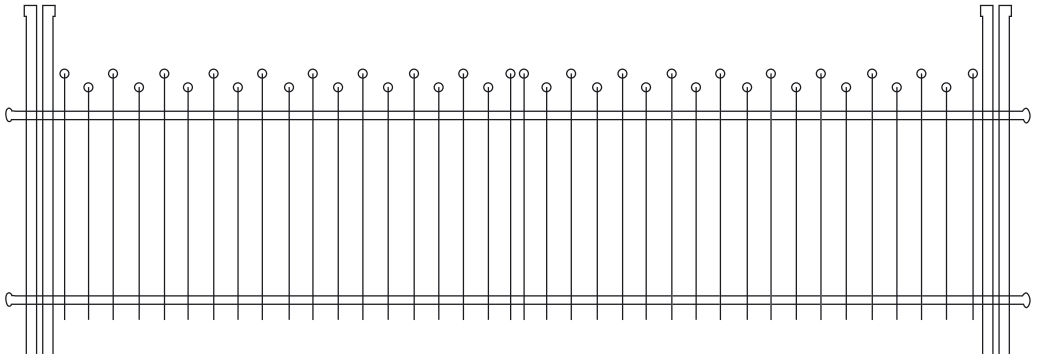
De- and Re-Territorialization

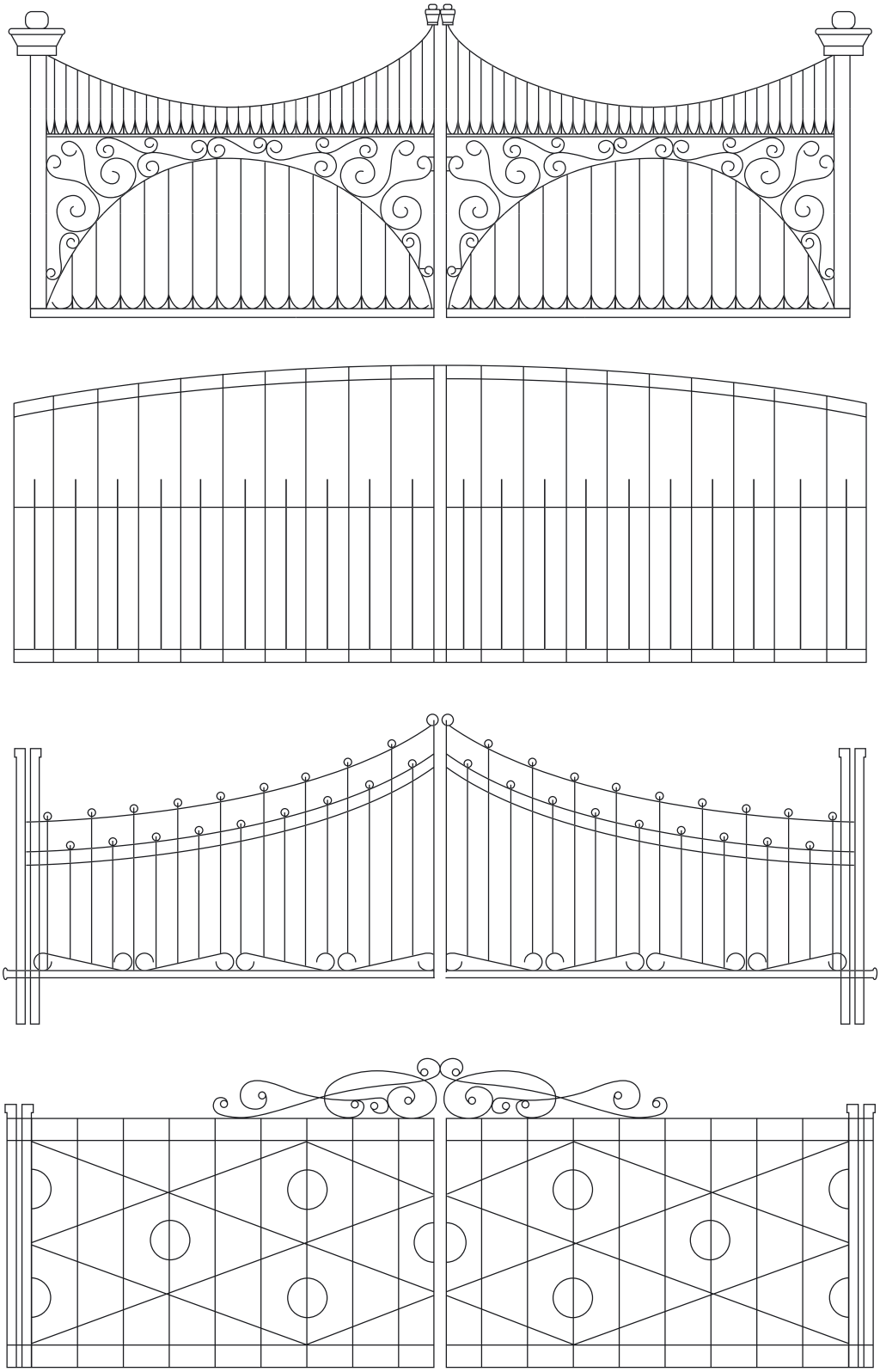
In addition to the horizontal dimension there is another aspect to an assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari call this the vertical dimension. Here they are reasoning in terms of territory. Every assemblage is territorial. In that regard, the discovery of the environment (in the sense of *Umwelt*, that which is all around us) has been a defining feature of the past century; just think of Henri Lefebvre's studies into everyday urban space and Ervin Goffman's into the influence of institutions (prisons, convents, boarding schools, psychiatric institutions) on the individual. In these studies the main question is no longer 'who is man?', but 'where is man?' Naturally this can be an identifiable location, like a football stadium or a part of the city (neighbourhood, metro). But a territory is more than simply a fixed place. A place is also something where something occurs, where something takes place, where something is experienced. In other words the problem of contextuality, or as Jeroen Brouwers writes in his novel *Datumloze dagen* (Dateless Days, 2007): 'just as a goldfish hates the cat and the cat hates the water.' What primarily interests Deleuze and Guattari is how territorialization, that which defines the boundaries of a territory, operates. Take the example











of a gated community. In these areas, specific social arrangements are in force alongside the laws and rules of jurisprudence of the national state. These mark the transition to rules and prescriptions different from those in the rest of society. When a house in a gated community is bought, the buyer signs a detailed contract that sums up the locally applicable rights and rules connected with the lifestyle and culture of the community in question. These rules can vary from a ban on drinking alcohol to the approved place to hang laundry. The contract, in other words, expresses the locally applicable, communal values and standards.[20] Adam Crawford therefore speaks of a 'contractual governance', whereby local agreements function as instruments of social control.[21] In the shadow of the law, these contracts produce their own normality or local jurisprudence.

20. Marc Schuilenburg, 'Citizenship Revisited: Denizens and Margizens', *Peace Review – A Journal of Social Justice* (2008), 20, 3, forthcoming.

21. Adam Crawford, '"Contractual governance" of deviant behavior', *Journal of Law and Society* (2003), 30, 4, 479-505.

This brings us to the last aspect of the vertical dimension. Perhaps the misunderstanding that territorialization only curtails the mobility of an assemblage has been created. The process of territorialization does bring about a unification of a social space, a certain cohesion of the place and identity of the persons present. But a territory like a gated community or deprived neighbourhood cannot always maintain its form; it does not remain a cohesive arrangement of a concrete social field indefinitely. An assemblage is only conceivable against the backdrop of an infinite mobility of social reality. In order to thematize this, Deleuze speaks of a line of deterritorialization, a movement that sets an assemblage adrift. This line escapes every assemblage, which means that it is constantly breaking open the existing field of arrangements. It dismantles every signifying and every formative order by creating new openings and new connections. So an assemblage can break down at any moment. This movement of continual decomposition always corrects itself. Deleuze and Guattari call this reterritorialization. The two movements imply each other. The one does not exist without the other. Every reterritorialization entails a deterritorialization.

So an assemblage consists of four aspects: in addition to content, expression and territory, deterritorialization is also part of an assemblage. This last notion needs further explication. There is always something that escapes an assemblage. Deleuze calls this alternately a line of deterritorialization or a line of flight. In *Dialogues* he describes this line as follows: 'It liberates a pure matter, it undoes codes, it carries expressions, contents, states of things and utterances along a zigzag broken line of flight, it raises time to the infinitive, it releases a becoming which no longer has any limit, because each term is a stop which must be jumped over.'[22]

22. Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogen*, op. cit. (note 11), 113.

More specifically, a line of flight has two characteristics. In the first place it is abstract. Because the line of flight is abstract, it should not be understood in terms of content or expression. It goes

much further. It is abstract because it ignores not only the difference between content and expression, but also the distinction between form and substance. A line of flight is therefore not abstract merely because it is immaterial. It is also formless. In the second place, a line of flight is immanent, which means that it is always part of a concrete assemblage.[23] The line of flight is incorporated in the organization of an assemblage. In order to emphasize the openness of an assemblage and the mobility of social reality, therefore, there has to be something that breaks through the order and cohesion and establishes a connection to other elements. This does not happen by synthesizing or adding elements, but by removing them from an assemblage and forming a different assemblage by connecting them to new elements. This is how movements of deterritorialization form new assemblages. In a dual movement, the territory is continually being reorganized, and as the principle of a deterritorializing movement, no less. For this reason, Deleuze considers the line of flight primary; it comes before everything else. A line of flight, after all, has no territory. Territories always come second.[24]

23. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 7.

24. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, op. cit. (note 5), 55.

Governance and Social Reality

Why is the concept of 'assemblage' more adequate than other terms to characterize the relationship between governance and social reality? In any event because an assemblage makes clear that the question of the multiplicity and the variations of social reality should be given prominence, in other words 'the heterogeneous' and 'the fluidity' of existence. Note: neither concept presents new abstract principles intended to provide a new representation of reality. Rather, they coincide separately with each 'incident' or each 'case'. This is why we cannot take the concept of assemblage, which Deleuze also applies to biology and literature, to the point of individualization and even in the domain of warfare, literally enough. It forces us to think about a different ontological and epistemological premise from what we were used to, with binary distinctions like individual/environment, part/whole, rational/irrational, and so on. Allow me to conclude by summarizing the most significant implications of the conceptual apparatus introduced here, mindful of Foucault's wish to approach it as a toolbox full of devices to have a go at reality. I shall do this in three variations, each dealing with the relationship between governance and social reality. In other words, how do we break with the classic understanding of social engineering, in which the individual is described in rational and instrumental terms and the effects of which keep society as a whole in balance?

1. The idea of social engineering is based on a distance between an individual and an environment. Without being part of it, the individual faces his immediate environment. From an external position, he can apprehend and comprehend social reality in its entirety. As an answer to its limitations in bringing

about effective changes in society, governance should not be seen as a strategy one can deliberately strive for. It is not based on a subject-oriented approach. If we look, for instance, at the technologies described (camera, public transport card, neighbour) in the surveillance assemblages, it would be a mistake to interpret these as neutral instruments that can purposefully be employed to achieve long-term objectives. In reality, technologies are never value-free. Technologies are social before they are technological. Rather than defining this kind of element in isolation, we should therefore look at their context and its effects. In other words, a 'co-functioning' is needed to achieve meaning. Otherwise these technologies remain marginal or they are little used. This takes us far from a traditional subject philosophy ('I think, therefore I am') in which the actions and decisions of a person are the product of a free, autonomous actor who always remains equal to himself. We have to assume that the effects of an assemblage cannot be ascribed to an individual and are not ascribed to an individual. Instead, the point is that the individual himself is an assemblage, a ceaseless process of transformation that, as it were, no longer has a beginning or an end.

2. Behind the distinction part/whole lurks the hypothesis that parts exist because of the whole ('something that already exists'). Not only are they part of the whole, they maintain the whole in existence. Evocative examples include the well-known theories that speak of 'society' ('risk society') or 'culture' ('prevention culture'). Yet when these focus on society as a closed whole, one can no longer speak of a strategy that extends in all directions and operates the same way at all levels of society. If the analysis that society is not an immutable, static quantity, an undifferentiated social space that has a fixed order, is correct, then we must stop studying the all-encompassing whole, that is to say society as a homogeneous entity with an internal cohesion. Instead we should look for the countless different signifying and formative arrangements created by new types of relationships and the categories and meanings that function as a result. In more general terms, we should focus on concrete assemblages, keeping in mind that there are always lines of flight that establish connections with unforeseen elements in other assemblages. On that point we have already observed that an assemblage is never self-contained, but rather always refers to other environments that operate or are yet to operate, with as a result an almost unlimited growth of completely different transformation matrices and productions of social syntheses in social reality.

3. The dynamic in a social constellation has traditionally been described in terms of a causal infrastructure. Behind this idea we find the presumption that the actions of individuals are the product of the whole ('society', 'culture', 'group') these persons are part of. This whole precedes the actions of persons, so that these actions unfold in an identifiable and predictable way. Subsequently, the explanation for these behaviours is

sought in rational capacities. The degree of social engineering then coincides with the stubborn view that people select the option that they expect will benefit them most. A characteristic feature of an assemblage, however, is that everything, in principle, has the same potential for meaning. Every connection creates something new. Therefore we should free ourselves of the idea that everyday forms of expression such as emotions, sensations, gossip and frustration play no signifying role, behaviours that in the philosophy of social engineering are still dismissed as irrational and unimportant. An assemblage is a matter of an infinite potential of relationships that continually bring about different connections between things and people. This lends unity to social reality. Not that of an eternal and static substance, but that of an unlimited surface upon which a unique play of interactions unfolds, without these being able to be traced back to fixed characteristics or rational processes.

In short, what matters is that we concentrate on an explanation of social reality in which stagnation is replaced by movement, in which prominence is given to assemblages over chaos or disorder, in which the public is given a place alongside the individual and the population, and in which everyday actions and speech in an open space are included. Not just as a prescriptive theoretical model or an anarchic endeavour, but as a practical method to better understand the relationship between governance and social reality.

Gijs van Oenen

Babylonian Social Engineering

How Contemporary Public Space can Learn from New Babylon

Philosopher of law Gijs van Oenen detects a 'socially engineered utopia' in the New Babylon project and other work of the Situationists. In light of political social engineering and of our behaviour in contemporary public space, he sees New Babylon as a 'playground'. He calls for an understanding of social engineering in spatial terms, so as to promote the interactive capabilities of human beings.

The socially engineered society was born in the 1970s and 'expired' in the 1980s. For such a short-lived phenomenon, it managed to acquire a remarkable historical significance. Perhaps because the socially engineered society had been 'a long time in the making' and, after its demise, lives on in societal consciousness, be it only as a sort of phantom pain. In this article I shall attempt to draw up a diagnosis of the socially engineered society, via an anamnesis that, from a political as well as an artistic standpoint, goes back to the 1950s, and stretches on both fronts to the present day as well.

Initially, social engineering made its entrance in art: in Situationism, and in particular in Constant's New Babylon. About half a generation later social engineering was mentioned in the political sphere, only to disappear barely ten years later, or in any event to be unrecognizably transformed. The renewed interest in Constant's work over the last ten years shows to what degree social engineering – insofar as it still exists – must now be understood in spatial terms. As a result, architecture and technology literally begin to 'play a role' in the shaping not only of public space itself, but also of norms and behaviour within that space.

'The Making of' Political Social Engineering

The Dutch term *maakbaarheid* (social engineering), or *maakbare samenleving* (socially engineered society) is of recent vintage. It only crops up for the first time in the public discourse in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[1] Odd, actually, for philosophers have a tendency to equate modernity and social engineering;[2] even I myself recently argued that social engineering is a product of the French Revolution.[3] The explanation for this apparent contradiction is also philosophical, at least Hegelian: social engineering can only be understood when its demise is already underway, by the twilight, in other words, in which Minerva's owl takes flight. The fact that society understood itself as socially engineered for only a short time is perhaps due to the fact that it exists only in and through the activity of its engineering, a capacity for self-formation and self-production it loses when this capacity becomes self-reflexive and realizes its potential of being accessible to all. Enlightenment and modernity entailed the promise that everyone could and should be responsible for the shaping of communal life. The realization of that promise, which ultimately took place in the 1960s and 1970s, simultaneously signified its demise. Jan Willem Duyvendak and Ido de Haan, in their 1997 collection on social engineering, in fact speak of the 'tragedy of the concept of the socially engineered society'.[4] The tragedy, I would add, lies primarily in the fact that it falls victim to 'too much of a good thing', just as in tragedy the hero falls victim to an overreaching, a taking-too-far (*pleonexia*) of a notion that is in itself right or necessary.

1. The first academic reflections can be found in the collection *Maakbaarheid van onze samenleving*, edited by N.H. Douben (Baarn: AMBO, 1978).

2. René Boomkens, *De nieuwe wanorde* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 2006), 9.

3. Gijs van Oenen, 'Democratie en straf na de maakbare samenleving', *Justitiële Verkenningen*, 33/8, 2007, 49.

4. Jan Willem Duyvendak and Ido de Haan (eds.), *Maakbaarheid* (Amsterdam: AUP, 1997), 173.

The first manifestation of social engineering, albeit under a different name, is represented by the measures Franklin Roosevelt instituted in the 1930s to stabilize economic and social relations in the USA after the disruptive crisis of the late 1920s. Of course this was a controversial, ideologically charged programme: with his New Deal, Roosevelt was going against the prevailing liberal doctrine of contractual freedom and economic self-determination. And he joined a new current in economics, which under the leadership of Keynes and later Galbraith argued that government could and should deliberately conduct economic policy.

This, in essence, was the impetus for a broader development in public administration, in which the concept of 'policy' became central. Policy is a product – perhaps even *the* product – of the socially engineered society. If one aims merely to order society, maintain the law and perhaps wage war, one can make do with 'politics', that is to say postulate laws and regulations and punish violations thereof. One who aims to *make* a society, however, needs policy.

Policy actually is, or to put it a better way, *does* the following: transform political decisions from a fact into a process, a process in which people – politicians, bureaucrats, citizens – are addressed as parties involved. The premise of policy is that to make a decision, and if need be to sanction it is not – or no longer – enough. In order to realize decisions, it is necessary that the 'parties involved' actually *become* involved. They must be informed about the purpose and the backgrounds of political decisions; they must actively contribute ideas and cooperation.

Policy thus mobilizes, and not primarily based on force or duty, but based on insight and persuasion. This makes policy a characteristic expression of interactivity. Initially it was the bureaucrats within public administration who had to be persuaded, but at a later stage – the early 1970s – it was citizens as well. They too should not be abruptly confronted by policy, but instead become involved in its creation, understand its rationale and cooperate in its implementation. All this, on the one hand, based on democratic motives of active citizenship, participation and involvement. But on the other hand, and certainly not in the last place, on motives of efficiency. Policy contributes to the creation of public support, as it is called. With this the paradigm of social engineering is fully embraced: government and citizen design and realize society in unison.

As an institutional expression of this, the Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands (SCP) was founded in 1973, an initiative of Joop Den Uyl's government. On the one hand this acknowledged that in this new era the government could no longer simply consult the older Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (the CPB, founded in 1945); it needed more insight into opinions and practices as they existed in the democratizing and pluralizing society. On the other hand, the appellation 'planning office' remained intact, indicating that 'social engineering' remained a question of central leadership and planning of society by government. The two aspects were merged by

the then-director of the SCP, Louis van Tienen, in his characterization of planning as a 'deepening of democracy', through which 'everything and everyone can be taken into account'. It was not planned politics that was undemocratic, but in fact unplanned politics, for it did not take the desires and needs of the population into account.[5] The institution of the SCP indicated that social engineering had become reflexive and self-aware and was to be approached through planning. At the same time, it was felt at the time that reflexive social engineering goes hand in hand naturally and seamlessly with democratization, a utopian idea that would not survive very long.

5. Jan Willem Duyvendak, *De planning van ontplooiing* (The Hague: SDU, 1999), 94. Honesty requires me to note that in 1978 Van Tienen, in his contribution to the collection *Maakbaarheid van onze samenleving* (see note 1), puts the pretensions of social engineering in quite witty perspective.

The founding of the SCP also provided a fine illustration of the initial phase of interactive administration – and with it, as I shall argue, also the beginning of the end of the socially engineered society. In this the perceptions, opinions and practices of citizens became relevant factors in political decision-making about societal reform. In other words, they were significant in the formation of 'policy'. The opinions and attitudes of citizens were no longer seen dichotomously in terms of 'passivity' or 'resistance' to what was decided in politics. There was a recognition that a diversity of opinions existed and that this, in principle, was a legitimate expression of the particular way that modern citizens, according to their own lights, attempt to shape their lives. Society can only be 'made', or socially engineered, when this diversity is kept in mind; policy planning can then anticipate and take into account societal feelings, reactions and oppositions.

Initially this was kept entirely in the hands of the government itself. Although they were no longer merely passive, and were already pluriform to a certain extent, citizens were still primarily objects of politics. In the 1970s, however, citizens quickly turned themselves into subjects of politics – or as it came to be called in contemporary administrative jargon, they became 'co-producers of policy'. They took the initiative. They did not merely wait passively, but rather began to form and express their opinions themselves – asked or not, desirable or not. This new spirit was expressed in sit-ins, demonstrations and new social movements. On the one had this created a new form of politics, in which the outspoken citizen is central. On the other hand the main interlocutor of this outspoken citizen was still naturally the government; this was the entity to which one directed one's complaints, desires, plans and objections. The government might do everything wrong, but in principle was capable of doing everything right.

Social Engineering in Art

The artistic counterpart, or forerunner, of the SCP had been created 15 years earlier, in the form of the 'Situationist city',[6] and in particular Constant's New Babylon project.[7]

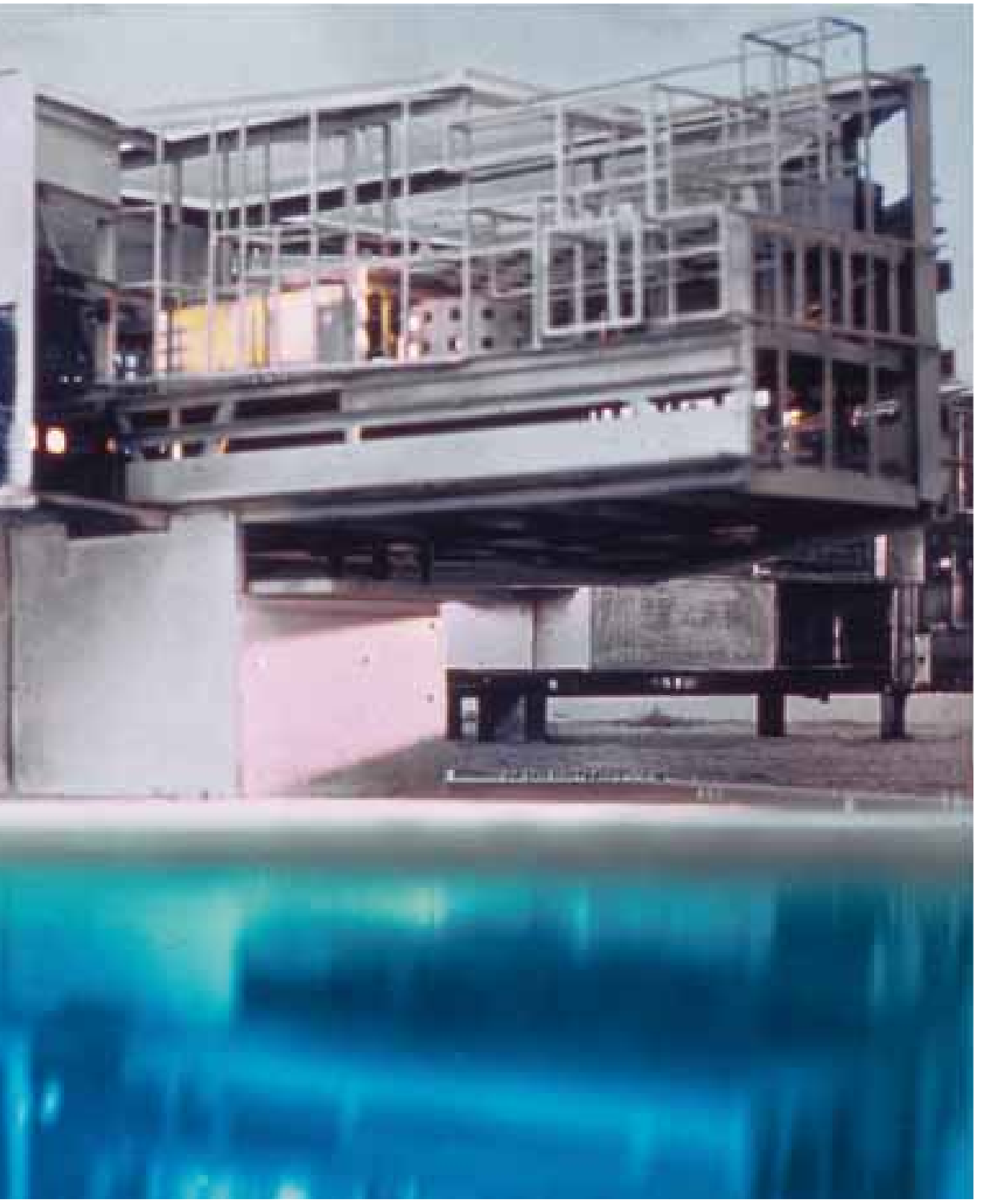
6. Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

7. On this see Mark Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-Architecture of Desire* (Rotterdam: 010, 1998). And compare with Deron Albright, 'Tales of the City: Applying Situationist Social Practice to the Analysis of the Urban Drama', *Criticism*, 45/1, Winter 2003, 89-108.

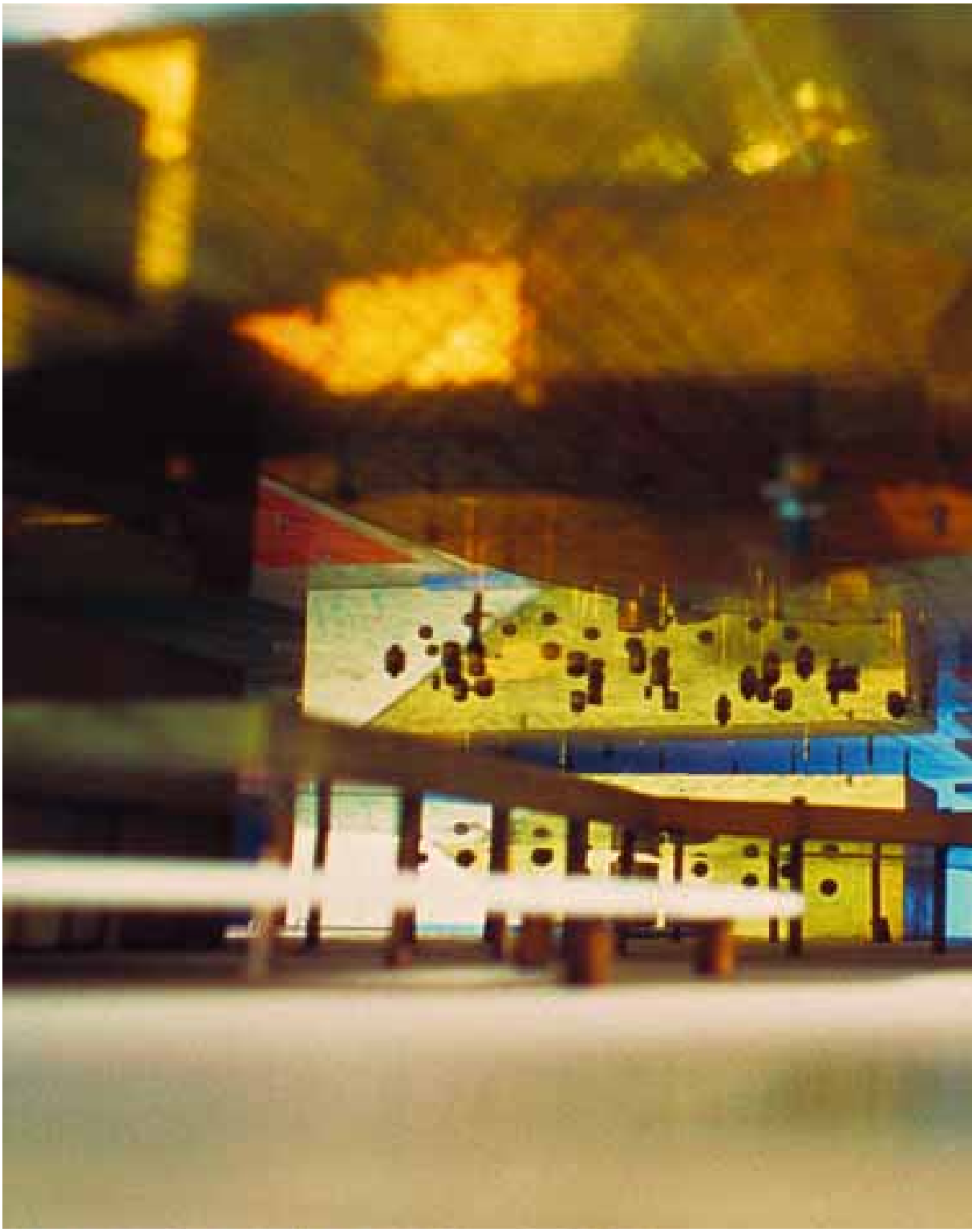
Constant, New Babylon, Combination of sectors, 1970.
Photo Victor E. Nieuwenhuys

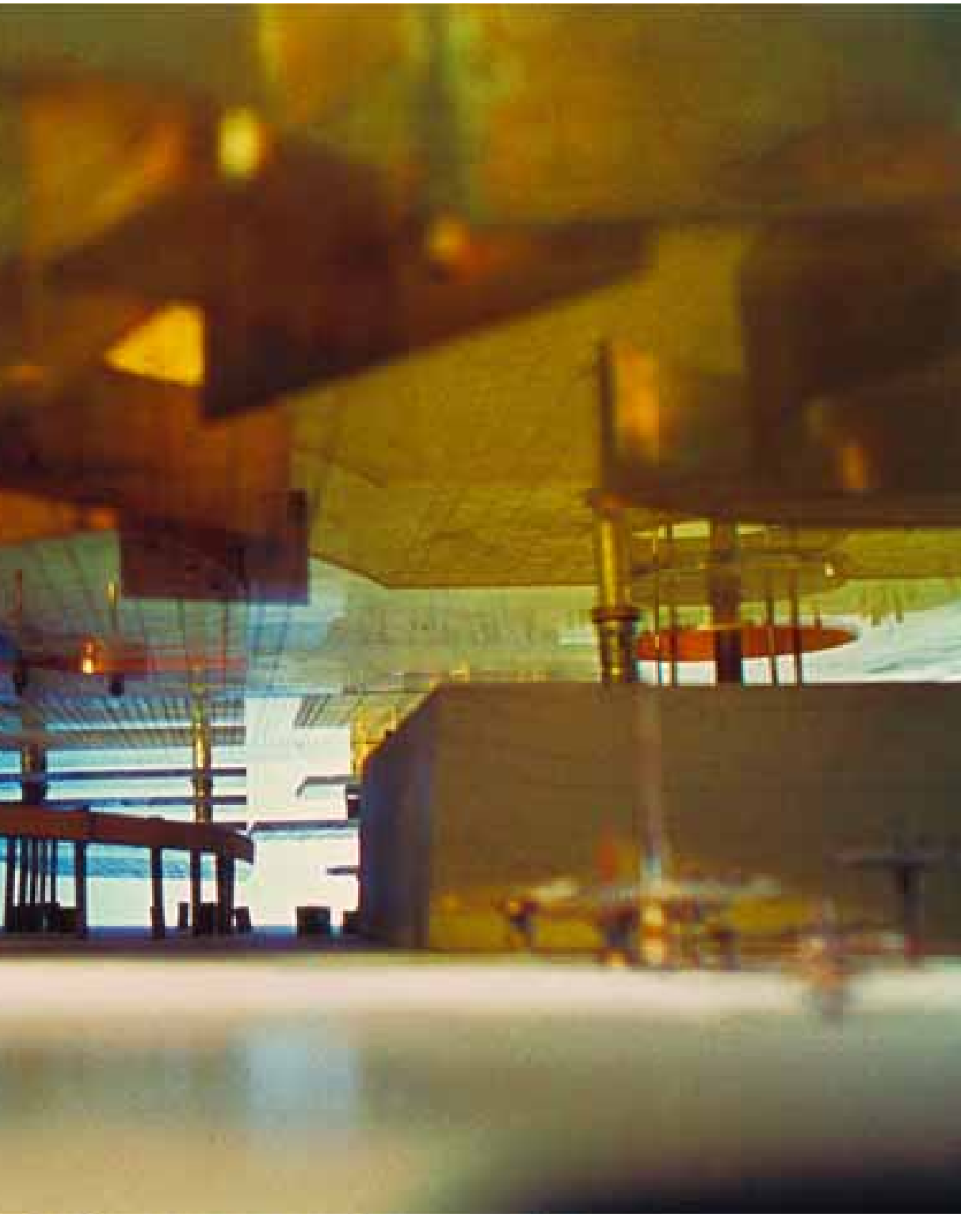
Constant, New Babylon, 1958-1959. Photo Victor E. Nieuwenhuys

Constant, New Babylon, 1958-1959, view of New Babylonian sectors, 1971.
Photo Victor E. Nieuwenhuys



Constant, New Babylon, Orient sector, 1959. Photo Victor E. Nieuwenhuys





Constant, New Babylon, Large yellow sector, 1967.
Photo Victor E. Nieuwenhuys

New Babylon too had been painstakingly designed so as to provide the maximum opportunity for individual development to everyone. It too was a reflection of an extreme philosophy of social engineering, which was not only socially but also to a large extent technologically situated. In this, New Babylon fit into the spirit of the late 1950s: technology was widely thought capable of resolving all major problems of society. In the post-Marxist utopia of New Babylon, human labour, hitherto always carried out with great difficulty, throughout history, to 'make' the world and make it available to man, would be replaced by technology, such as the robot, for instance. Human action and dwelling would be facilitated everywhere by technology. As such, this already entailed that the distinction between human and technological practices would fade and that this would usher in the cyborg – at the time still under Asimov's quasi-Cartesian formula, 'I, robot'.

A central idea in Situationism was that of a 'unitary urbanism', aimed at extricating urban life from the private, social or political conventions that kept it fettered. It was inspired by the *dérive*: 'the wandering that undermines the structure of the city, by creating ephemeral environments that are beyond the reach of any centrally organized authority.' This wandering is made possible on the one hand by a massive architectonic and technological complex of corridors, towers and platforms, and on the other hand by a societal and technological complex in which labour has been superseded by 'free time' in which human beings can develop creatively. New Babylon is the quintessential example of the Situationists' attempts to use modernist ideas and materials in a playful and less formal way, in order to create a built environment that would encourage people to actively create their own environment, instead of adopting the position of passive consumers of efficient, functional designs. New Babylon is a world that literally and figuratively surpasses the spheres of labour and production. The models and sketches of this dream world show a potentially infinite network of 'multilevel' corridors linked by even larger 'nodes' – approximately like today's airports – so that users are 'free to play'.

The whole design of the complex invites wandering and 'playing'; in a sense it compels it. New Babylon is the paradoxical built environment in which the *dérive* has been elevated to a norm and even facilitated through planning. New Babylon does not feature or facilitate habitation. Everywhere, the passer-by is 'encouraged', or actually even obligated, to literally create his or her own environment or atmosphere via an advanced system of 'air conditioning', in order to fully 'make' the environment according his or her self-developed insights. Whereas the (traditional) modernist city was designed for productive use, New Babylon, in an ironic twist, 'produces' non-productive behaviour, such as wandering and playing. In one stroke, New Babylon – on paper, and in the form of a model – represented both the beginning and the climax of the idea of the socially engineered society. And actually its immediate demise, as well.

'The Undoing of' Political Social Engineering

The interactive enthusiasm that characterized social engineering at its height underwent a radical transformation in the 1980s, which we can sum up as instrumentalization and institutionalization – both possibly inevitable consequences of spontaneous and more or less unregulated enthusiasm. This also explains the oft-heard accusation of 'betrayal' of earlier ideals, the way Christopher Lasch, for example, describes the 1970s as a betrayal of the 1960s in *The Culture of Narcissism*, widely read at the time. The institutionalization of interactivity actually represents the societal and political acknowledgement of its significance.

In the 1980s, therefore, we witness the rise of 'efficiently negotiating administration', that is to say a method of politics or administration that views this interactivity more as a strategic process than as a communicative process. Involvement becomes primarily understood as 'stakeholding', and stakes have to be negotiated; public opinion-making and democratic representation play at most a secondary role in this. This transformation in the democratic experience, incidentally, originates from both sides. For both the government and the citizen, an increasingly instrumental attitude goes together with an undiminished democratic or interactive engagement. That is to say, both sides increasingly consider such engagement self-evident and indispensable.

At the same time, however, there is a rapidly progressing lack of orientation. This applies to politics, in which the concepts of left and right begin to lose their clear meanings. Leftist thinkers begin to wonder whether their aims can be best achieved through the state or through private initiatives ('the market'). And it also holds for society, a phenomenon that British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher explicitly declares to be a mirage ('there's no such thing as society'). Thatcher's statement describes not so much a fact as a liberal trend. Emancipated citizens increasingly express criticism of collective arrangements and, in their interactivity, begin to focus more on their own interests, with the NIMBY activist as the best-known product.

In an environment in which people are primarily focused on themselves and their own interests, in which the collective orientation on values and goals has become subordinate to individual autonomy and in which 'society' evokes above all the frustration of one's own individual plans, it is no surprise that this society begins to be perceived as a threat. Society has changed from a reassuring organizer of welfare to a source of potential dangers and threats. This transformation was thematized by Ulrich Beck in the mid-1980s as the 'risk society', in his book of the same name that came out one month after the fall-out at Chernobyl.

In the process, the whole concept of 'society' as the object of collective formation, administration and deliberation loses its positive meaning. It now acquires a negative meaning instead: an incalculable collection of others. Whereas the socially engineered society was still predicated on a mutual trust

between government and citizen, in the neoliberal society this has been replaced by mutual distrust. Whereas the socially engineered society was still a whole of citizens and institutions that lent itself to design through collective deliberation, the neoliberal society manifests itself as a fragmented collection of individual fractional interests and an 'unsurveyable' and difficult to govern whole of societal processes – a conglomerate that can not be 'made' but at most disciplined, controlled and punished.

We might also say that social engineering has not so much disappeared as taken on a different, negative meaning. As Pierre Rosanvallon says: citizens no longer dream of taking over power in order to exercise it; instead they are intent on weakening it or making it 'transparent'.[8] Whereas in the philosophy of social engineering policy is still made from a drive to reform society, based on collective deliberation about objectives, the intention of policy is now defensive: government measures are now meant to protect citizens from what threatens their individual pursuit of self-actualization. Building on this, we can argue that a loss of social engineering coincides with a demand for security.

8. Pierre Rosanvallon, *La contre-démocratie. La politique à l'âge de la défiance* (Paris: Seuil, 2006), 261.

Social engineering thus makes way for security. Or we might also say that security is the distorted guise in which social engineering manifests itself in the risk society. After all, people still believe in social engineering in the sense that risk analysis and risk management are thought to be possible, whether through further technological management and limitation of dangers, or through repressive and proactive action by the government, through police and judiciary action, in other words. Both possibilities imply a loss of trust in the capacity of people to guide their own actions based on the norms that, in the era of social engineering, were in fact embraced as an expression of the success of emancipation.

People may still be emphatically convinced of the capacity and the importance of making choices themselves, but at the same time they believe less and less that this enables them to exercise any meaningful influence on society. Or that such influence is still worth pursuing for individual citizens, or even a positive value at all. We still want to be explicitly involved in the process of policy and decision-making. But at the same time we have few illusions about, and little interest in, the concrete results of such processes. Interactivity itself now seems more important to many citizens than the goal that was initially pursued by engaging in this interactivity.

One consequence of this interactive frustration – or as I also call it, interactive metal fatigue – is that citizens no longer can or want to take the organization of their common environment into their own hands. An operative situation emerges that goes beyond interactivity, whereby interactivity is now merely a question of 'going through the motions' – albeit that these motions, as stated earlier, are still seen as a significant achievement. Because they are no longer able to put these capabilities into practice, citizens begin to hold others responsible for civilized intercourse in the

public sphere. In this way they are indicating that they no longer consider themselves able to produce the interactive capabilities necessary to act according to public norms to which they themselves, as emancipated and outspoken citizens, subscribe. This self-declared incapacity to behave socially forms the core of what I call 'interpassivity'.[9]

9. Gijs van Oenen, 'Languishing in securityscape. The interpassive transformation of the public sphere', *Open*, no. 6 (Rotterdam/Amsterdam: NAi Publishers in collaboration with SKOR, 2004), 6-16.

Interpassive tendencies can be identified in various domains of political and societal life. Interpassivity, however, is intrinsically related to the problem of security because the outsourcing of citizenship capacities is a significant cause of the emergence of the whole thinking and perceiving in terms of security. We could even define security, in principle, very simply as the 'outsourcing of citizenship'.

If we now ask, 'outsourcing to what or to whom?', a significant part of the answer is 'not to interactive institutions anymore, but to prescriptively organized environments'. In other words, to the built environment, to the objects and structures all around us.

The Legacy of New Babylon

As previously stated, the founding of the Social and Cultural Planning Office in 1973 marked the advent of interactive administration, and with it both the climax and essentially the demise of the socially engineered society. It is no accident that the establishment of this office coincides almost exactly with the evaporation, around 1972, of Situationism, as it was represented by Guy Debord in the 1960s in particular, and with the dismantling of the New Babylon project in 1974. From the 1980s onward the societal problems and contradictions described above, which were in essence already visible in the design of New Babylon, or which become visible in retrospect, began to manifest themselves. Such as galloping individualization, problems of governance in public space, and an 'atmospheric' form of control over the living environment.

New Babylon was intended as a playful environment that lends itself to an infinite number of transitory contacts, whereby one hops from one temporary meeting place to the other in an idealized form of interactivity. This mobility and detachment would create new worlds and establish new communities. According to Constant, the New Babylonian 'at any given moment in his creative activity is himself in direct contact with his peers' and 'all action loses its individual character'.[10] Yet Constant's own sketches of the project offer – in the eyes of today's reader – an entirely different impression: that of lonely, lost individuals who can no longer find any direction or goal and, in the immense spaces of the project, are primarily searching for themselves. They never seem genuinely engaged with anything or anyone; in fact Peter Sloterdijk calls them 'flux existentialists'.[11] One might say that the principles of *dérive* and *détournement* were implemented a little too fundamentally in the design, so that any form of substantive social engagement quickly – indeed

10. Constant, 'Outline of a Culture', in: Wigley, op. cit. (note 7), 162.

11. Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären III: Schäume* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004), 659.

– 'derails'. Or, in the risk society, turns into its opposite: today, public spaces modelled after New Babylon are those quintessentially perceived as 'unsafe'.

The change in the character of the public space, in part because of the rise of the media, is partly responsible for this development. As Rem Koolhaas argues in 'Generic City', in the new metropolis, the 'generic city', an 'evacuation of the public domain' is taking place. The generic city is perhaps 'liberated from the captivity of center',[12] but it is now kept in check by other mechanisms. Whereas television used to be the way to turn an unsurveyable human mass into an audience, the situation is now reversed: the mass is made surveyable by an extensive system of live cameras. Public spaces are increasingly being subjected to monitoring and surveillance in this way – Ctrl-[Space], as the ZKM in Karlsruhe so cleverly thematized it in 2002.[13]

12. OMA, Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau, 'Generic City', in: idem, *SMLXL* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1995), 1249-1251.

13. Thomas Levin, Ursula Frohne and Peter Weibel (eds.), *Ctrl-[Space]: Rhetorics of surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother* (Karlsruhe/Cambridge, MA: ZKM/MIT Press, 2002).

Finally, there is the atmospherics of New Babylon, an aspect in which the project explicitly and strikingly preludes Peter Sloterdijk's notion of 'spheres'.[14] New Babylon is conceived as entirely isolated from the outside world, which makes total control of the environment possible, precisely in terms of 'atmosphere', of regulating light and air conditions. In this regard too it forms a model for the contemporary development of urbanization, in the sense that the strongest forms of urbanization are now taking place in tropical regions and thus that the *governmentality* of these cities will be more a question of air conditioning than of politics.[15]

14. Compare with Sloterdijk, op. cit. (note 11), 659-667.

15. Rem Koolhaas, 'In Search of Authenticity', in: Ricky Burdett and Deyan Sudjic (eds.), *The Endless City* (London/New York: Phaidon, 2007), 320-323.

In this case too this control is cast in highly individualistic terms. In New Babylon everyone can form a small atmospheric 'bubble' for himself, a little private habitat, in public space – approximately what Sloterdijk calls 'foam', and what for the modern, mobile and threatening environment René Boomkens has christened 'capsularization': an 'immunizing' disconnection from the environment.[16] This can take place physically, by way of the automobile, for instance. But today it is increasingly electronics that produce the 'membranes' with which we form our own 'virtual' foam particle or capsule: the mobile phone, GPS, mp3 player. The environment can even do this for us or in our name. Through electronics and the Internet, this creates what is now called Ambient Intelligence: the environment that anticipates our presence by adapting to our personal preferences, in terms of light, air and sound – a radicalized form of 'air conditioning', in other words. But this personalization of the environment is ambiguous, because it simultaneously opens countless opportunities for surveillance and control;[17] at the same time, it is a quintessential example of the outsourcing of citizenship and of a new form of (inter-) passivity.

16. Elaborated by Lieven de Cauter in *The Capsular Civilization* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2004).

17. Compare with Mike Crang and Stephen Graham, 'Sentient Cities. Ambient Intelligence and the Politics of Public Space', *Information, Communication, and Society*, 10/6, 2007, 789-817.

It should therefore come as no surprise that politics today, to a significant extent, can be understood as spatial planning, and that in 2002 a Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research began operating alongside the Social and Cultural Planning Office. This new planning office exercises, in a certain sense, an institutionalized version of what the Situationists called 'psychogeography': 'the study of the specific effects of the geographic environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and the behaviour of individuals.' It too, viewed from this standpoint, deals with the *dérive*, described by Debord as 'a technique of passage through various ambiances'.[18] Of course Constant and Debord did not foresee or intend that New Babylon, the *dérive* or psychogeography should become a form of science of control or surveillance. And we could still argue that, for example, its very floating character makes the *dérive* a form of – interpassive! – resistance against surveillance and control science, and perhaps even forms the core of criticism in the twenty-first century.[19] Yet there is no doubt that psychogeography has a great future, primarily as the science of the directive design of public space.

18. Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2006), 81 ff.

19. Scott Lash, 'Power After Hegemony', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24/3, 2007, 68.

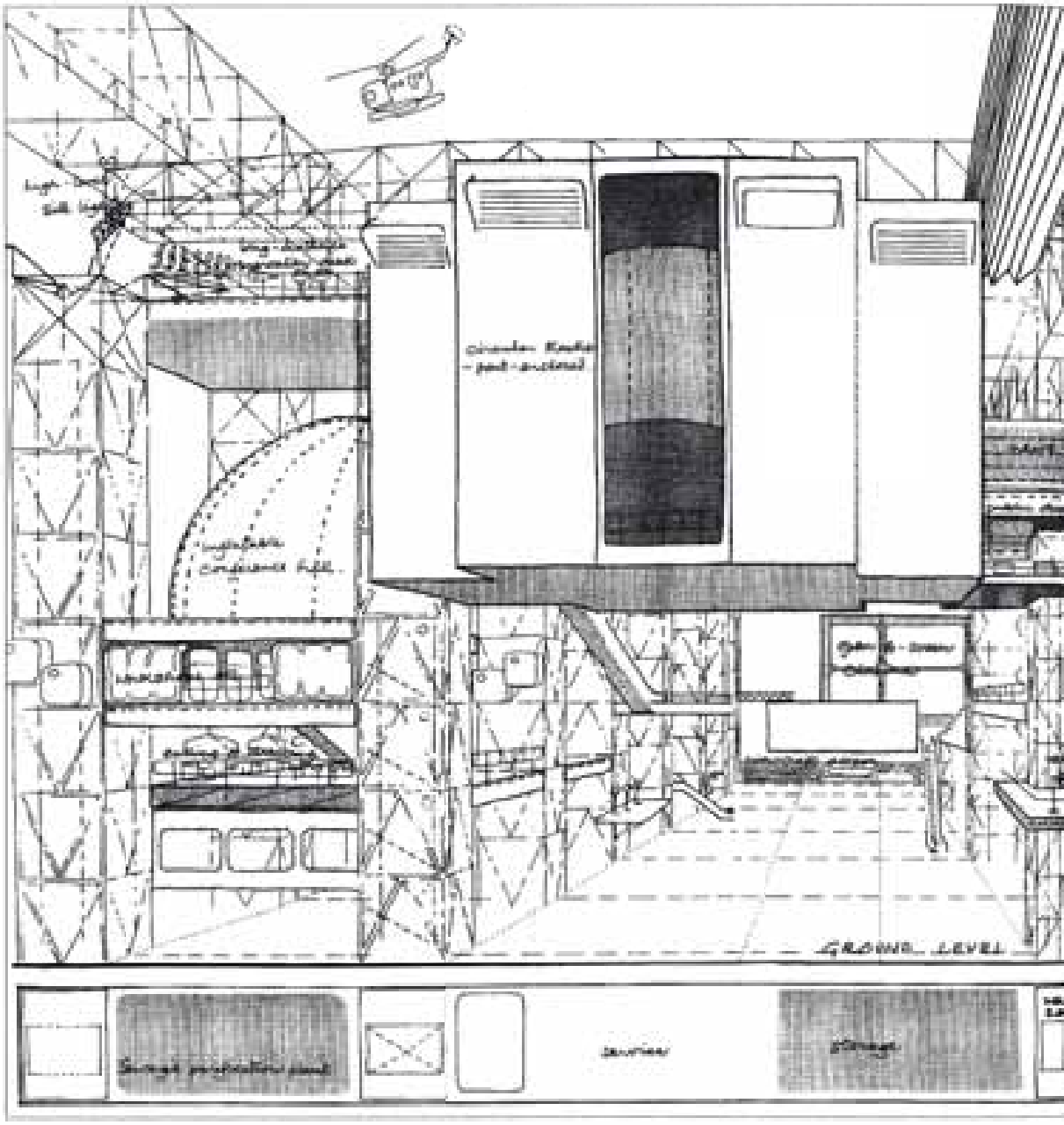
If we extrapolate this further, we might also say that because of this development, 'objects are starting to show us the way', an idea that dovetails with the work of Bruno Latour.[20] This could be called a 'new New Babylon'. In this environment, it is the objects, and more generally the physical design of the space, that leads us or compels us into behaviour we are no longer able to bring ourselves, as a result of our interpassivity. These can be simple objects like speed bumps, roundabouts or hotel keys, or 'vandal-proof' upholstery on public transport, glass panels kept clean and whole in Publex bus shelters, but also chip-operated turnstiles for public transport or biometric systems that regulate access between different physical or institutional spheres.

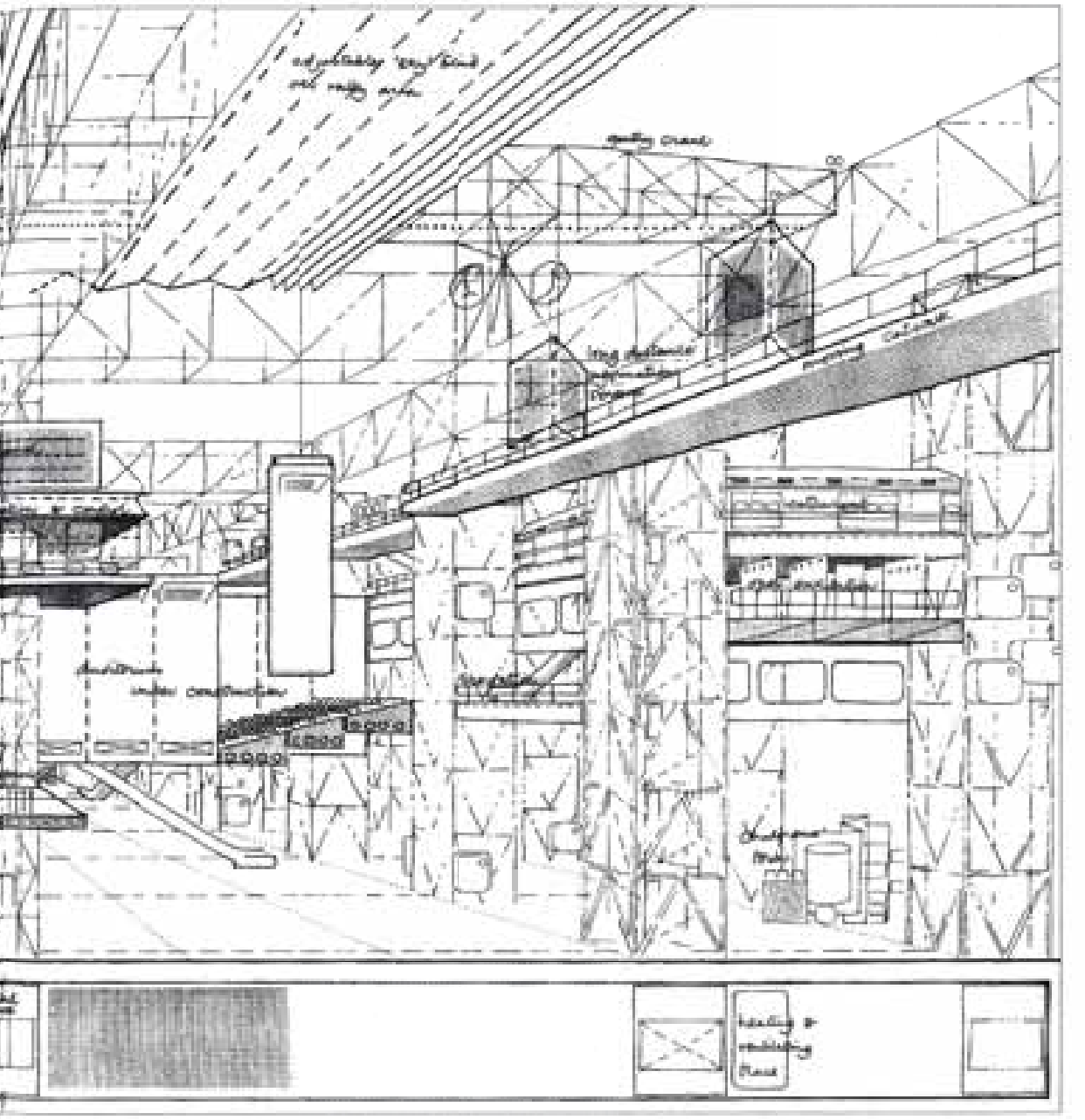
20. See for instance Bruno Latour, 'From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public', in: Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (eds.), *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (Karlsruhe/Cambridge, MA: ZKM/MIT Press, 2005), 14-41. And compare with Huub Dijstelbloem, *Politiek vernieuwen. Op zoek naar publiek in de technologische samenleving* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 2008).

This is, on the one hand, a menacing form of 'control', in which our behaviour is monitored and guided by systems and no longer by interactively developed and internalized norms. Objects not only instruct us in how to move and behave, but they also 'tell' researchers and detectives how to reconstruct these movements and behaviours, as the popular television series *Crime Scene Investigation* shows us night after night.

On the other hand, viewed more positively, the 'intelligent environment' is a form of 'support' that the objects provide us with. They help us to achieve the behaviour that, in principle, we would like to display, but are not (or no longer) able to. While we still use the objects instrumentally, and in that sense are still in the grip of the modernist philosophy of social engineering, we have achieved a curious about-face: it is the technological objects that have to help us remember our human norms, that have to help us remain human. We have indeed come a long way

Cedric Price, 'Fun Palace', 1964.





since Isaac Asimov: instead of the robot developing a sense of self, of 'I', it is now the robot that has to teach us to say 'I'.

And perhaps it goes even further. Perhaps the intelligent environment can lend us not just moral support, but also free us, in the expressive sphere, of our obsession with a public space that must be secured. The revival in interest in New Babylon also has to do with the playful quality that was characteristic of this project, and of Situationism in general.[21] The same is true of the comparable project by the English architect Cedric Price in 1960-1961, 'Fun Palace'. Price had in mind a 'laboratory of fun', in which an almost unlimited design of the environment would also be possible, for the benefit of artistic and relaxing activities such as dancing, making music and acting on stage. The original design was never realized, but a more modest version was, under the name InterAction Centre in the Kentish Town area of London.[22]

21. Compare with Libero Andreotti, 'Architecture and Play', in: Tom McDonough (ed.), *Guy Debord and the Situationist International* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 213-240.

The challenge to architects, urban planners and spatial designers, then, is to maintain or even introduce this play dimension in the public spaces of the future, which will inevitably be mainly attuned to interpassivity and capsularization. This challenge has already been taken up by Liane Lefaivre and Henk Döll, who raise the urgent question of how 'playgrounds' can be established in the present-day city.[23] They see playgrounds not as isolated, incidental spaces purely for the activities of children, but rather as a 'network' of places in the city that are kept 'open' by and for what you might call their potential for play. In this view, inspired by Aldo van Eyck, the public space itself forms a 'polycentric net' that fills open spaces throughout the city and thereby invites one to a temporary 'playful sojourn' in all kinds of locations.

22. Stanley Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price* (London: Black Dog publishing, 2007).

This also seems to me the best lesson for the present out of the more or less tragic history of New Babylon: how can we create playgrounds in public space – in the literal and the metaphorical sense – that promote the interactive capabilities of human beings and thereby contribute to their being able to act in accordance to their own norms. Then we will have made something of the socially engineered utopia of Constant and the Situationists after all.

23 Liane Lefaivre and Henk Döll, *Ground Up City: Play as a Design Tool* (Rotterdam: 010, 2007).

Study from Liane Lefaivre and Henk Döll, *Ground Up City* (Rotterdam: 010 publishers, 2007). © döll-atelier voor bouwkunst

STRUCTURE

3-dimensional play network in Meeuwenplaat, Hoogvliet

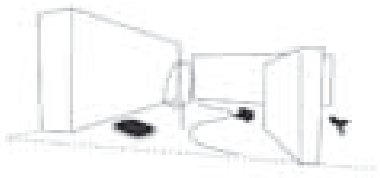
connecting layer

interstitial layer

theme layer

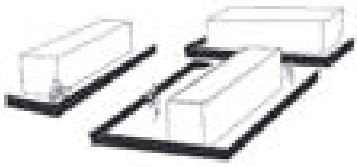
Substantiation of the play network, which reinforces the existing typologies.

EXISTING TYPOLOGIES

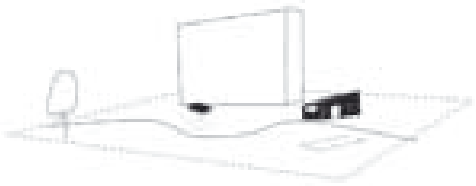


Do-it-yourself court

Game corner



Amazing maze

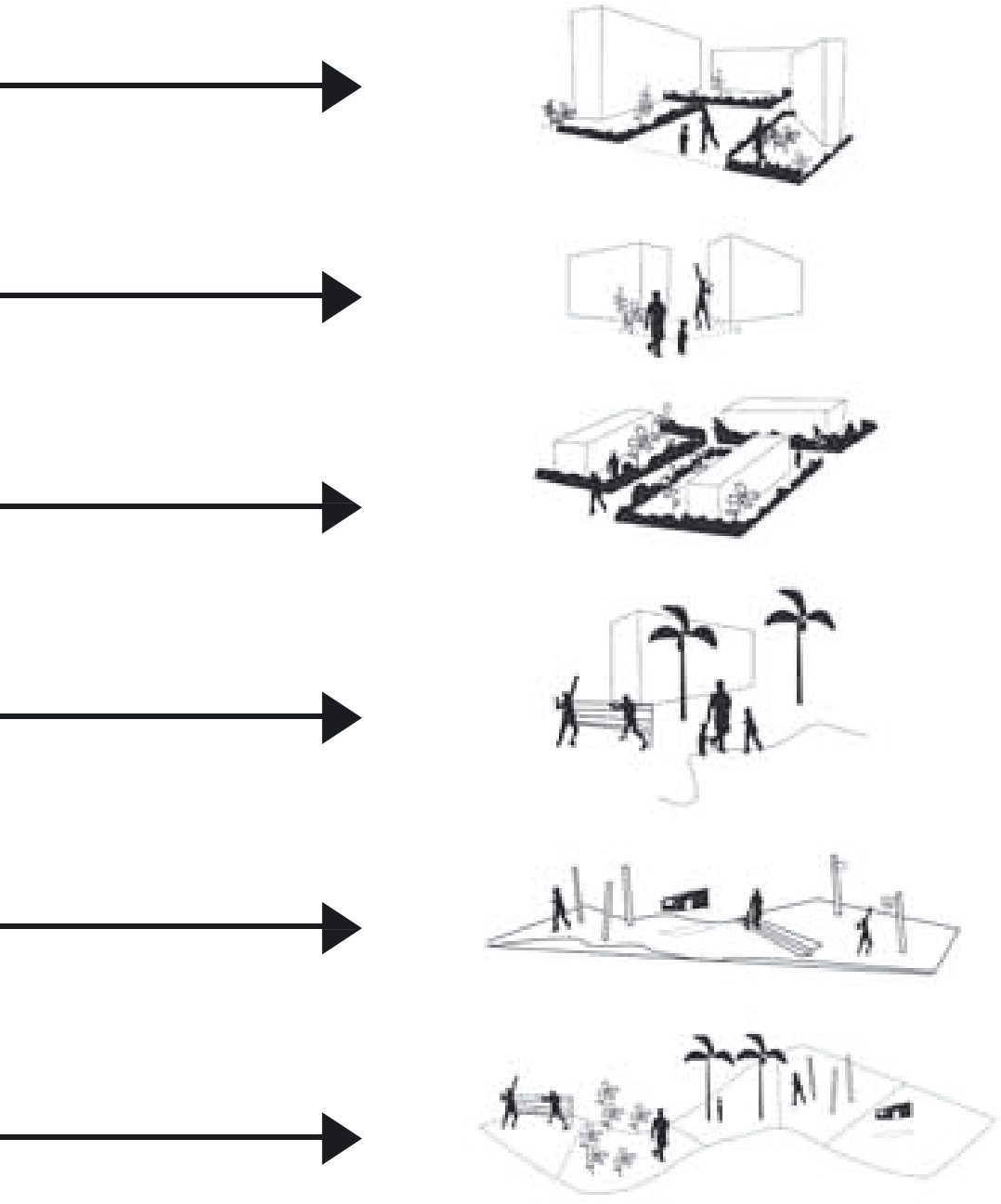


Play events

Suburban jungle

Chain of events

NEW TYPOLOGIES



Wouter Vanstiphout

Social Engineering of the City and Urban Design

Ideology as an Achilles Heel

Using two urban development plans for a new city grounded on ideological doctrine – one in a totalitarian regime and one in a democratic society – architectural historian Wouter Vanstiphout demonstrates how the identification of urban planning with a political societal system ultimately turns against itself. Urban planners would do better to see the city not as something that can be made out of nothing, but rather as an unruly reality for which they develop instruments so that it can grow in all its complexity and layeredness.

In the cellar of the *Akademie der Bildende Künste* in Vienna, the same school where both Otto Wagner and Joost Meuwissen taught – and which expelled a young Adolf Hitler twice for his meagre talents at drawing as a student – is the *Anatomie Saal*. Rigid wooden benches stand in a steep gallery arrangement around a platform bearing a blood-encrusted slab of white marble. This is where corpses used to be dissected before an audience of art and architecture students. The dark and stuffy room is now used occasionally as a classroom, mostly by the architecture and urban planning programme of the academy.

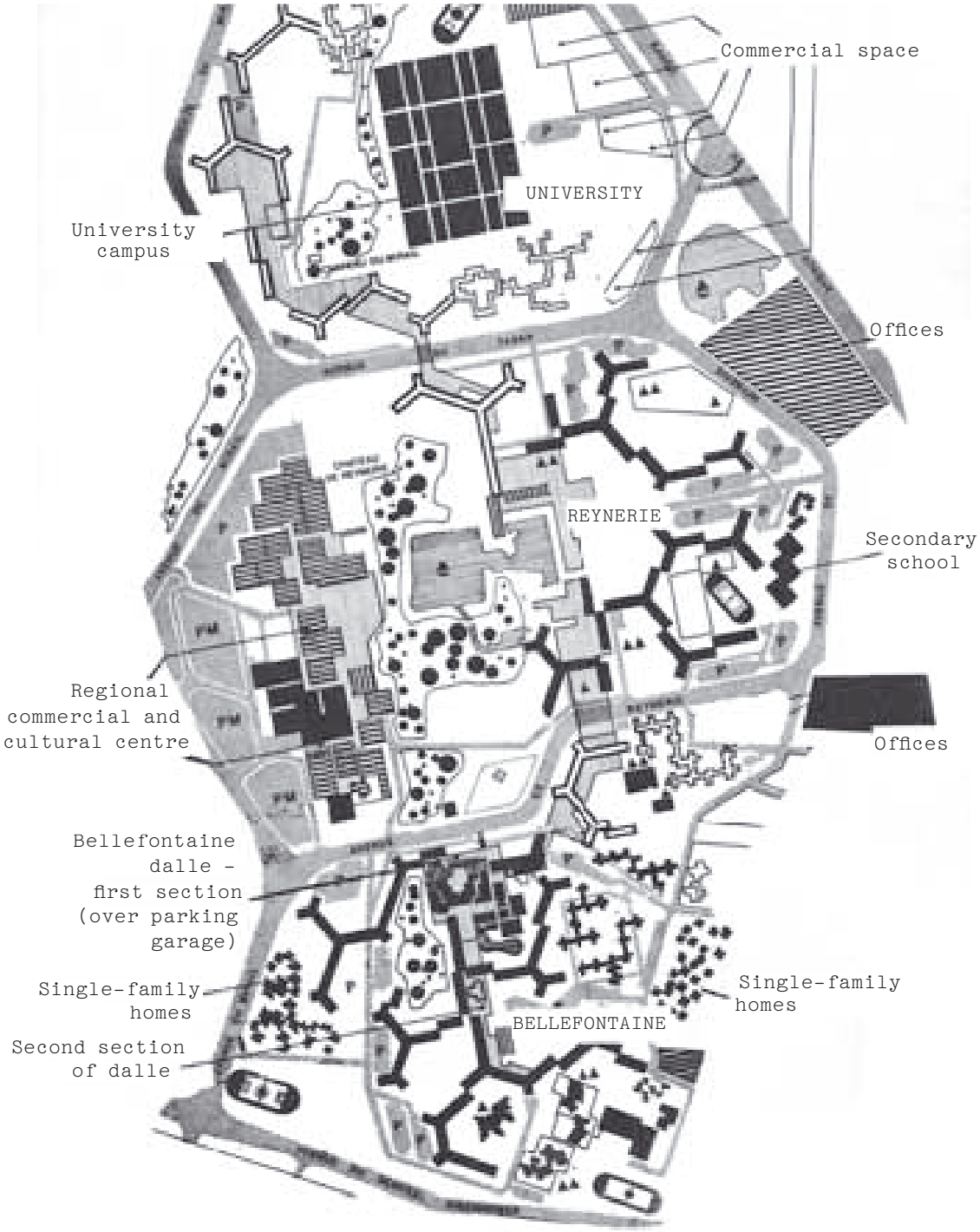
It was here that a student, after my lecture was over, asked, 'Are you basically saying then that there is no point in studying architecture, and that we should become politicians or social workers instead?' 'No, no, no, on the contrary, you should . . . etc.,' I hastened to say, worried that I had seriously failed in my duty as a teacher. What had so bewildered this student? My lecture was yet another in a series in which a new-build city of the 1950s and 1960s was looked at, how it had been designed, what had happened to it subsequently, and how people now felt compelled to radically transform it again. The case study this time had been Toulouse – Le Mirail, the famed *Ville Nouvelle* by Candilis, Josic & Woods in the south of France. The student's question as to whether he would not do better to become a social worker or politician had come after a number of examples of how forces that have nothing to do with architecture ultimately turned out to determine the fate of cities like Toulouse Le Mirail.

The design for Toulouse Le Mirail, like other examples from the oeuvre of Candilis, Josic & Woods and that of the other architects who were part of the Team 10 movement of the early 1960s, were embarrassingly familiar to the students, even if many were seeing it for the first time. The organic metaphors, the endless stacks of rectangular units in geometric excrescences that evoke the computer game *Tetris*, the patio patterns, the fantasizing about the residents' individual uses of the space, the floating pedestrian platforms, the collages of abstract architecture with scenes from films and out of lifestyle magazines, and especially the harsh critique of technocratic and rigid building production matched what they, in 2008, were producing in the studios of the academy, this time with computers. They blanched, like someone who suddenly recognizes himself in the face of a much older person, when they saw how little their idealistic projects differed from those of their forebears, which they had barely researched. When, quoting Karl Marx, I said that everything in history happens twice, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce, they were not reassured, certainly not when I described the tragedy.

The plan for Toulouse Le Mirail was presented by its architects at the time as a radical break from the technocratic urban design of the 1950s. They were inspired by sociological and psychological studies that demonstrated how soulless life among the tower blocks in a green setting could be, in comparison to that in the old cities. The organic, responsive, complex towers and megastructures that make up Toulouse Le Mirail were

Candilis, Josic & Woods, plan of the first phase of Toulouse Le Mirail (developed between 1961 and 1971), with an emphasis on the tree structure.

Toulouse Le Mirail, analysis of functions, from a study by Leonard Downie Jr., Paris, 1972, see www.aliciapatterson.org/APF001971/Downie/Downie07.html



Aerial photograph of the southern sector of Toulouse Le Mirail, Candilis, Josic & Woods. © Avery Liveral Collectionsm Columbia University New York.

The French police patrol the district La Reynerie in Toulouse Le Mirail during riots, November 2005. Photo Jean Philippe Arles, Reuters

to be seen as a radical break from the conventions of the industrialized housing construction of the time. In spite of this break from the *grands ensembles* and *cités* built in the same period, Toulouse Le Mirail suffered exactly the same fate, decades later, as all those soulless blocks in green settings in the periphery of French cities: immigration, unemployment, crime, alienation, frustration, riots. The discontent reached a climax in the early autumn of 2005: Toulouse Le Mirail figured in the top five of the hotbeds, a list compiled by comparing the number of burned-out cars found in the mornings. In this light, the endless series of neo-Team 10 projects being produced by the students did have something of a farce about them.

This is not a plea for more teaching of history, or a lament about the superficiality of today's students. On the contrary, the reaction in the anatomy room indicates that this new generation of architects measures the success of architecture by the degree to which it actually improves society. When this fails, the disappointment is great. It is a symptom that shows that architecture still dreams of the social engineering of society. It still sees a direct and linear connection between the form architecture takes and the form society takes. Just as Candilis, Josic & Woods thought they could create an organic urban society with their organic city form, today's students and architects still think in architectonic terms about society, more than they think in societal terms about their architecture. But the fact that they think about society, and dedicate themselves to it with admirable tenacity, is certain.

The reaction to the story of Toulouse Le Mirail shows that it is difficult, certainly for young architects, to think in strategic and dialectic terms about their work. They generally see architecture as a means of changing society, but at the same time as the physical expression of an already changing society. This ambiguous interpretation of their craft makes them vulnerable to acute episodes of profound disillusion. It is ironic that this pure interpretation of architecture as the expression of the social order that drives the young architect should be shared by the very powers that seem to overrun architecture. It is precisely bureaucrats and technocrats who use the unity of form and content as an argument for generally radical physical interventions of which all sorts of immediate social and economic effects are expected for the residential areas and cities involved.

This architectonic interpretation of society – as a permanent reconstruction in the most literal sense – has placed the architect himself, however, in a generally marginal, dependent and purely servile role. By building a historic-looking city centre, people hope to produce the authenticity of the historic city. By building varied façades in a residential area, people hope, through the same logic, for a diverse and varied local culture. By demolishing the impoverished and monotonous high-rise districts, people hope to resolve the problems that exist there. The old technocrat and the young idealist seem to agree on one principle: architecture = society, society = architecture. The former does not really believe it, as a rule, but uses it as a rhetorical strategy to generate public support in a simple way

for his generally clumsy actions; the latter usually genuinely believes it, so that he and his craft sometimes end up in a most peculiar position.

I would like to use two examples to illustrate that this is not limited to the disappointment of the young architect, but instead that the identification of architecture with a particular ideal of society can lead to bizarre situations and unexpected twists. The first in Tehran, the other in Amsterdam.

Bad Urban Planning is Better than Good Urban Planning

On 1 January 1979, after months of fighting and riots, the Shah of Iran fled to Egypt. On 1 February, Ayatollah Khomeini, the spiritual leader of the rebellion, returned to Tehran after more than a decade in exile and called on the population not to listen to the interim government of Prime Minister Bakhtiar and to accept the Islamic government proclaimed on 11 February as the sole legitimate government. The referendum of 1 April resulted in 98 per cent support for the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, headed by a council of clergymen under Khomeini's leadership. This brought to an end 38 years of rule by Shah Mohammed Pahlavi, to 54 years of rule by the Pahlavi dynasty and – according to the Pahlavis – to more than 2,500 years of uninterrupted monarchy, since the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great in 529 BCE.

It also brought an end to the White Revolution, one of the greatest and most comprehensive modernization campaigns ever undertaken. The Shah used his close ties with the USA and the billions of dollars in oil revenues to drag the country into the twentieth century in one fell swoop. Land reform, suffrage for women, literacy, nationalization of water and agricultural land and many other campaigns were encompassed in a 19-point plan that was put into operation at a breakneck pace starting in 1963. Every aspect of the country was considered engineerable, including the pace at which a country develops. The expansion and modernization of the capital was to be the most monumental demonstration of this extreme philosophy of social engineering.

In a country lacking any institutions for master planning, urban design, infrastructure and architecture, drawing up and implementing a master plan for Tehran was an immense undertaking. It resulted in an invasion of consultants, engineers, architects, planners and other professionals, who not only had to create a plan out of nothing, but also build up the organizational infrastructure to carry out this plan. The drawing up of the master plan, which was supposed to take Tehran forward by 25 years, and in the process multiply its area several times over, was entrusted to the Los Angeles-based firm of Victor Gruen, who worked with the Iranian architect Abdol Aziz Farman Farmaian. Gruen, a Viennese Jew, inventor of the shopping mall and designer of dozens of American downtowns, integrated the old Tehran into a hierarchical system of highways, parks and greenbelts, as well as satellite cities each accommodating hundreds of thousands of new inhabitants. The new Tehran, from the regional scale to the scale

The district of Ekbatan in Tehran, built in the 1960s and ’70s.

The swimming pool in the district of Ekbatan is no longer in use, following the 1979 ban on swimming in public.

of the front door, was defined with precise allocations and typologies for each income class. The green valleys that ran down from the Alborz Mountains towards the more densely built areas below were incorporated in the plan, conducting air, greenery and water through the city in the process. The best American and European architects and landscape designers were employed to build new cities, landscape parks, universities, palaces, monuments and hospitals. In addition, a fully elaborated infrastructure was put in place for zoning plans and process management. Foreign consultants were hired to monitor building applications on behalf of the government and fill law books with new regulations. The construction of the city was subjected to a meticulous schedule of phases, with contours that were extended every five years, so that the city would expand outward in an even pattern. The planning horizon was 1991, the year when the new Tehran would reach its maximum extent.

When Ayatollah Khomeini landed at Tehran Airport after more than 14 years in exile, he must not have recognized the city: the framework of highways, the controlled expansion and in particular the huge and hypermodern, fashionable high-rise district of Ekbatan, right by the airport, with its glittering swimming pools among the tower blocs, must have left him flabbergasted. It was more than astonishment: everything established and left behind by the Shah and the despised Americans was considered repulsive and evil and therefore had to be erased from memory. Sometimes this was done physically, such as with the mausoleums of the Shah's ancestors; sometimes it was done symbolically, by renaming monuments, or by covering the modernist buildings in murals depicting the Ayatollah and later the martyrs of the war with Iraq. But what to do with an entire city, and its attendant master plan, that could be seen, as a whole, as a monument to the hated deposed ruler?

At first the Islamic government did the predictable: it had a new master plan drawn up, one that did reflect the ideas of the Islamic Revolution. This plan, however, was never adopted, firstly because it contained no urban design ideas that could be considered revolutionary, and secondly because there were no resources to implement the plan. The war with Iraq meant there had to be cutbacks; municipal departments had to support themselves, and furthermore one of the promises of the new regime had been that every Iranian should be allowed to build his own house.

This led to a concept that can be called brilliant in its cynicism, or at least postmodern, particularly in the combination of neoliberalism and religious fundamentalism. The Gruen plan, with its regulations worked out down to the most minute detail, and its precise management of open space, building density, separation of functions, greenery, infrastructure and landscape, was thoroughly despised on ideological grounds. In spite of this, or rather because of it, it was decided to maintain the plan. The authorities, however, with the plan in hand, began to sell applicants the right to exceed maximum building densities, to violate the zoning plan, to build in areas designated as parks. The whole infrastructure of regulations, designs and monitoring agencies was in

full swing, but as a giant supermarket of exemptions. To reinforce the influx of applicants with deep pockets even further, the city's contours were immediately extended to the final 1991 situation. Tehran's huge population growth did the rest. The master plan played a crucial and indispensable role in creating, in a matter of a few decades, one of the most chaotic, densely built, insalubrious and yet fascinating and spectacular cities in the world. In its spectacular location at the foot of the mountains, with the permanent blanket of smog that hangs over it, it resembles Los Angeles, but without the ocean, without palm trees and with millions of cars immobilized in one of the most chronic traffic jams in the world. The billions generated by cannibalizing the master plan served in part to pay the hundreds of thousands of municipal officials. They also paid for immense prestige projects like the construction of Navab Street and the still-unfinished Imam Khomeini Airport.[1]

If you fly over Tehran with the master plan on your lap, you can still make out, like an archaeologist, the lines and areas of the Gruen plan amid the endless mass of houses. Here and there, moreover, a modernist monument breaks through the chaos, like an abandoned temple in the jungle. This city, in a few years, has managed to do what it took medieval cities hundreds of years: to absorb the original grid in the unplanned chaos. For the ayatollahs of the Islamic Revolution, a hated and bad plan like Gruen's was far more useful and better for their objectives than a so-called 'good' plan that they would have had to implement and pay for. Because the plan aimed to provide the counterform for a society that was the opposite of what the ayatollahs believed in, they could use it not only to generate one of the biggest urban growth spurts the twentieth century had ever seen, but to make a huge amount of money out of it to boot. The degree to which the plan contributed to this is proportional to the degree to which its makers were aiming for precisely the opposite.

1. See Ali Madanipour, *Tehran, The Making of a Metropolis* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1998); Soheila Shahshahani, 'Tehran: Paradox City', *IIAS Newsletter* #31, July 2003, 15; Wouter Vanstiphout, 'Teherans "Lost Civilization"', in: *Stadtbauwelt* (2005), 36, 2005, 76-81.

The Best Urban Design Is No Urban Design at All

Tehran after the Islamic Revolution seems far too extreme to be instructive for us in Western Europe; yet the mechanism behind it can be seen in urban projects in our barely expanding democracies as well. The similarity lies in the use, in a negative sense, of the ideological passion that inspired the project of the previous generation, and in the sometimes violent dismissal of the whole discipline of urban design in the process of realizing the most recent type of social engineering.

We can find an interesting example of this in the Bijlmermeer. This satellite suburb of Amsterdam was built in the 1960s and inspired by an ideological urgency rare for the Netherlands. The Urban Development department was keen to show that, after the seventeenth-century ring of canals, Berlage's Plan Zuid in the early twentieth century and Van Eesteren's General Expansion Plan in the 1930s, it too was capable of making another giant stride forward.

The densely-built urban fabric of Tehran.

In addition, there were the actions of a very principled alderman, named Joop den Uyl, who felt the plan had to be implemented as an essential and therefore uncompromising statement about new collective housing – no hybrid forms of high-rise and low-rise buildings, in other words. The Bijlmermeer was therefore built as an ideological statement about how people should be housed. Unprecedented quantities of square metres of housing space, greenery, collective facilities, accessibility by car and public transport, would be available to everyone. People would be able to live together in high densities and establish a new collectivity in the common spaces and routes where they would encounter one another. The plan for the Bijlmer was influenced on the one hand by East German and Russian urban planning manuals, and on the other by Toulouse Le Mirail, and of course by the great fountainhead: Le Corbusier's *La Ville Radieuse*.

In part because of the delayed demolition of the Nieuwmarkt area and therefore the delayed influx of Amsterdam residents, because of the construction of Almere, because of Surinam's independence and because of immigration in general, the Bijlmer, instead of a hypermodern residential district for Amsterdam's white middle-class families, became 'the Netherlands' first Third-World City'. Instead of an unilaterally built statement about modern living, it became a fascinating amalgam of Caribbean and African communities, with hard cores of white believers, who all used the Bijlmer in all of sorts of ways its planners had never foreseen.

When the Bijlmer evolved in this way over several generations, the planners decreed that the 'experiment' had failed and that it was time to tear it down. Precisely when the Bijlmer was just getting somewhere. The many housing corporations that owned the Bijlmer high-rises had been privatized in the late 1980s, and they began to merge until in reality a single housing corporation owned the whole of the Bijlmer. It took the demolition of the Bijlmer high-rises and their replacement by single-family homes and market-dictated apartment buildings firmly in hand.[2]

2. 'De Nieuwe Bijlmermeer', *Archis* (1997), no. 3, 8-84.

Whereas the original urban development department, under the direction of head designer Siegfried Nassuth, and supported by Alderman Den Uyl, succeeded in exercising total control over the design of the Bijlmer, and was even able to go quite far in keeping to the concept during its implementation, there were two other levels over which they had far less control. Firstly, groups of Amsterdam middle-class families – for the reasons summarized above – did not snap up the flats in sufficient numbers, and entirely different people came in their place. Secondly, the urban development department had little influence over other departments, such as public housing, traffic and transport, economic affairs, so that many elements fell through the cracks of the plan and in general were either not implemented or implemented in a totally different way, such as the collective spaces and the parking garages.[3]

3. Wouter Bolte and Johan Meijer, *Van Berlage tot Bijlmer, Architektuur en stedelijke politiek* (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij Nijmegen, 1981), 192-391.

Things were very different for the housing corporations 30 years later. Be-

cause of their mergers and because of the fact that with the idea of demolition they presented the city authorities with a *fait accompli*, which the city, it must be said, quickly supported, there was far greater control over all aspects of the immense operation to wipe out the Bijlmer in favour of a more up-to-date city district. This time the corporations also had control over the influx and outflow of residents. More to the point, this was not simply a condition for the success of the operation, it was the objective of the operation. In addition, housing corporations are increasingly taking over the responsibilities of public housing. They build schools, they take part in the development of neighbourhood shopping centres, they have more and more influence on the organization and use of public space, they participate in job-creation programmes, they work with mosques and churches, they even build mosques and churches, they invest huge sums in information, identity campaigns and branding projects, under the label of reputation management. All of this is called the integral project, whereby there is a conscious affirmation that restructuring is primarily a socioeconomic project, in which the physical aspect is merely a means to an end. In addition, an elaborate arsenal of resources is applied to create a harmonious, socioeconomically profitable, ethnically varied but not excessively diverse residential area, with heavy emphasis on social cohesion, participation, integration and emancipation. Seldom has the apparatus for realizing a socially engineered society been so elaborate and been applied in such self-evident fashion. 'We touch your life in every way' is the terrifying slogan of the development agency of the Indian capital of Delhi; it would be better suited to the housing corporations that carried out the restructuring of the post-Second World War residential areas of major Dutch cities.

The regeneration of the Bijlmer was first and last an intervention in the demographic structure of the Bijlmer, whereby the physical interventions were merely an instrument. By demolishing the high-rises that housed concentrations of Ghanaians, Sierra Leoneans, Surinamese, Vietnamese, etcetera, where illegal and legal residents lived side by side, where there were significant levels of crime and little employment, a new socioeconomic reality could be established at the local level in a very short time. By subsequently allocating the new dwellings to those residents of the Bijlmer who did pay their rent and met all manner of requirements, and by putting the rest of the dwellings, in a sophisticated way, onto the high-pressure Amsterdam housing market, it was possible to construct, with great precision, a community that was radically different from that which originally existed, but which retained enough elements to be understood as a renewed and improved version of the old Bijlmer. This is social engineering on a massive scale, integrally implemented and, according to the criteria its planners had themselves set, extremely successful. Moreover, it is a form of social engineering that penetrates further into the personal living sphere of its residents and in the demographic composition of society than was possible in the time of Nassuth and Den Uyl.

View of the Bijlmermeer in 1971, shortly after the realization of the first high-rise neighbourhoods. Photo Dienst Ruimtelijke Ordening, Amsterdam

Urban design played an important role in this massive and heavily ideologically charged intervention – by its absence. In the first phase of the regeneration, the sectional plans were still bound together by a largely metaphorical master plan by Ashok Bhalotra, who represented the multi-ethnicity of the Bijlmer, now acceptable only as a simulacrum, with his street for a thousand cultures.[4] Ultimately this planning perspective vanished from the regeneration, even from its representation. The housing corporations and the urban development department declared large-scale master plans relicts of a bygone era, when people still thought society could be socially engineered. It was asserted that we now live in an era of individualization, and that the city must therefore develop organically. The organic growth of the Bijlmer became the urban design statement that had to eclipse the statement of the satellite city of the future, or that derived its very power from its rhetorical contrast with the unity of form of the old Bijlmer.[5]

4. Marieke van Giersbergen, 'Afscheid van een utopie, interview met Ashok Bhalotra', *Archis* (1997), no. 3, 43-45.

5. Anne Luijten, 'Een modern sprookje, de Bijlmer in verandering', in: Dorine van Hoogstraten and Allard Jolles (eds.), *Amsterdam ZO, Centrumgebied Zuidoost en stedelijke vernieuwing Bijlmermeer 1992 – 2010* (Bussum: Uitgeverij Thoth, 2002), 7-25.

In the process, the Bijlmermeer is now being covered in buildings without a master plan, as a collage of sectional plans drawn up by developers and corporations, resulting in a generic structure of low-rise neighbourhoods, depressing avenues of brick apartment buildings, shopping centres, and on the other side of the railroad tracks an office park deserted at night and on the weekends. It is precisely in the absence of urban design intention, in the automatism of its urban growth, in the banality and entropy of its results, that we can recognize the organic growth of the Bijlmer. This even goes so far that one of the project managers of the Bijlmer regeneration, Willem Kwekkeboom, in an essay about it, cheerfully relates how an architect was commissioned to design buildings that were supposed to effect the transition in scale from the new low-rise structures and the old high-rises, but that it was ultimately decided to tear down the high-rises, with as a result an unpredictable and incomprehensible ensemble of medium-rise tower blocks between two low-rise developments. This, according to Kwekkeboom, in fact shows how diverse and adventuresome the organic growth of a city can be. The dysfunction of the most elementary urban planning control is seen as evidence of how up-to-date the project is.[6]

6. Willem Kwekkeboom, 'De vernieuwing van de Bijlmermeer 1992 – 2002, Ruimelijk en sociaal', in: Van Hoogstraten and Jolles, ibid., 7-25.

The sweeping and intricate social engineering applied to the socioeconomic structure of the Bijlmermeer has been given a spatial counterform that is intended to express its very opposite: organic growth and bottom-up transformation. The absence of urban design camouflages the excessive presence of the corporations in the development of this area; the lack of spatial control is a smokescreen for the excess in socioeconomic control. The intelligent thing about this lies in the fact that it was clearly realized that the discipline of urbanism was not capable of presenting a convincing picture of organic growth,

Bijlmermeer, urban plan.

The ‘transitional’ buildings in Nieuw Gerenstein, separating low- and high-rise areas. Probably 2001. Photo Hans Brons, dRO/Gemeentearchief Amsterdam

not even Ashok Bhalotra, but that the elimination of urban design control and the deliberate admission of generic, chaotic process do lead to the desired result.

Achilles' Heel

The examples from Tehran, the Bijlmermeer and even Toulouse have in common that the profound identification of an urban planning project with a particular societal ideal or system ultimately turned against the completed projects themselves. This took place in the most perverse way in Tehran, by using the political untouchability of the plan to allow its cannibalization and to let the city expand with the greatest possible speed. With the Bijlmer and Toulouse Le Mirail, however, this took place in a much more refined way. There, with an appeal to the historical and cultural significance of the original project, an architectonic scapegoat for socioeconomic problems was found, thereby providing an immediate political spin to a radical intervention in the areas themselves, instead of revealing it as a coup by the corporations themselves, an imaginary liberation from a caricature of 1960s planning. In all three cases, the greatest power of these projects, their ideological energy, proved to be their Achilles' heel. But in all three cases, the city itself was also the real victim in this immolation of urbanist utopias.

In the case of Tehran we can only guess how the Gruen plan would have ultimately turned out, if it had been absorbed step by step over decades by Iranian urban life, which could have manifested itself in a variegated patchwork of dense and open, green and urban, park-like and commercial elements, in all sorts of ways. In Toulouse Le Mirail and the Bijlmermeer, however, it was evident that the so-called failures of the original concept – because entirely different people from those it was built for came to live there, who then used the complex in an entirely different way as well – had resulted in something that was far more layered, more complex, more organic and more flexible than in their wildest dreams, and also than what those in charge of their restructuring now say they want to create. And it is precisely this that is now being implacably demolished.

The problem of the new social engineering we find in urban regeneration and restructuring areas in Europe and in the Netherlands in particular, is that it is so unspoken and euphemistic, and yet so powerful, paternalistic and unavoidable. Because this new social engineering can no longer be expressed in unilateral and recognizable urban planning models, it is now difficult to criticize. In this far-reaching postmodern phase of the urban project, in which social engineering is disguised in a cloak of 'unengineerability', and the absence of the urban design has taken over the role of the urban design, and private enterprises increasingly take on public roles, the reality of the contemporary city is steadily being relegated to the background.

If we reason from the very limited perspective of architecture and urbanism, it is imperative that these disciplines no longer be used as symbols, models or icons of a particular societal system or ideology. In most cases, after all, this

Bird's-eye view of the renewal of the Bijlmer, 2002. Small adjustments have been made in the course of time. © Projectbureau Vernieuwing Bijlmermeer

will only end up turning on the projects themselves after a couple of generations. But most of all it means that architects are confusing the shaping of new icons for one political ideal or the other ('Creative City', 'Gem Area', 'Organic City', 'Sustainability') with the actual realization of a societal effect. If we defined social engineering as 'realizability', architects could then apply their inventiveness and tenacity and idealism to the development of instruments that, based on a very specific professionalism, can resolve particular problems and demonstrate new possibilities that no one else could have come up with. This would also mean that they would not see society as 'engineerable', in the sense of 'constructable', but would accept that it is an unruly reality, far more complex than anything socially engineered could ever be. The role of architects could be to supply this unengineerable palimpsest with new elements, impulses, lines and places, and thereby make it even more complex, better and richer.

But we must also resist the temptation to immediately formulate an optimistic new perspective. Perhaps the confusion that so easily arises in the minds of architecture students is the best the current design world as a whole could achieve. An openly acknowledged identity crisis, precipitated by three or four decades of ever more rapid cycles of societal embrace and rejection might perhaps lead at last to a reconsideration of what architecture and urbanism themselves want of society. With this article, I hope to have made a modest contribution to this.

Marc Schuilenburg

The Refugee as *Homo Sacer*

A Short Introduction to Agamben's 'Beyond Human Rights'

In discussions about 'makeability' or social engineering, specifically when they concern manageability and biopolitics, references are often made to the ideas of philosopher Giorgio Agamben. *Open* is republishing his key 1993 text 'Beyond Human Rights', with an introduction by philosopher and jurist Marc Schuilenburg. According to Schuilenburg the figure of the *homo sacer* that Agamben presents in this and other writings leads to many misunderstandings. He also addresses the differences in Agamben's ideas about biopolitics and those of Foucault.

In 1993, Giorgio Agamben (b. 1942), an Italian political philosopher at the University of Verona, published a text about the status of the refugee, 'Beyond Human Rights', in which he links the issue of refugees with human rights. The first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights incorporates the motto of the French Revolution (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*): 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.' Yet while the article speaks of 'human beings', Agamben argues that human rights are not compatible with 'the human', the merely alive, as such. In the case of the refugee, his or her political and legal status is considered a temporary state, Agamben writes in 'Beyond Human Rights'. Having arrived in another country, he or she, following a positive assessment by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, is subjected to all sorts of control mechanisms (citizenship exams, shaking hands, language tests, etcetera) intended to turn him or her into a 'full-fledged citizen'. Goodbye refugee, welcome citizen.

To Agamben, the treatment of refugees demonstrates how modern politics work. According to Agamben, who is significantly influenced in this by Michel Foucault, life is dominated by biopolitics, which he defines in his book *Homo Sacer* as 'the assimilation of natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of state power and politics'.[1] Power over life is not exercised in this by a sovereign ruler; statistics are used as input for the actions of the government. To Agamben this biopolitics did not originate around the mid-eighteenth century, as Foucault writes in *The Will to Knowledge* (1976); it is at least as old as Western political history. As far back as the Ancient Greeks a distinction was made between 'the human', which was called simple or natural life (*zoè*), and a 'qualified life' by which the specific form of life or lifestyle of an individual or group (*bios*) was meant. Neither is biopolitics based on an optimization of the conditions of life in order, as Foucault asserts, to control the 'body as a type' through all manner of measures in the area of public health, dietary customs, housing, immigration, but rather, Agamben writes, on 'life that is has been excommunicated', in order to 'indicate the boundary that connects and separates what is inside and what is outside'.[2] Ultimately Agamben's view of biopolitics remains strongly focused on a general legal argument (which, with his notion of a 'state of exception' furthermore plays out largely on the politico-constitutional level of the nation-state). Foucault, on the other hand, breaks with a legal consideration of power and mixes biopolitics with disciplinary exercises of power actualized in local practices in a 'particular period, in a particular country, as a response to particular needs'.[3]

According to Agamben, the position of the refugee coincides with that of the *homo sacer*, a figure in Ancient Roman

1. Giorgio Agamben, *De soevereine macht en het naakte leven* (Amsterdam: Boom/Parrèsia, 2002), 9, 129.

2. Ibid., 142.

3. Michel Foucault, *Ervaring en waarheid* (Nijmegen: Te Elfder Ure, 1985), 85.

law whom anyone could kill without committing a murder (in the legal sense). Agamben sees the ambiguity contained in this definition in the status of the refugee. Although he or she is a living being, he or she has far fewer rights than the citizens of nation-states. This cancels out the principle of the equality of all human beings as sentient beings. Human rights, Agamben writes, are not capable of bridging the gap between the two 'forms of life'. According to Agamben, and in this he follows Hannah Arendt, the expression 'birth' in the first article of the human rights declaration coincides with 'citizenship'. The consequence of this analysis is that there is no longer any room for merely being alive, the most elementary characteristic of any living being. Life is consequently absorbed in abstract variables called 'nation-state' or 'society' or 'law' or 'citizen' (and so forth). From this perspective, human rights turn out not to be genuinely universal, but in fact the property of citizens.

This does not mean that the refugee is *outside* society. He is assimilated as an element within society (just as the outlaw is always 'in the law'). The set 'outside-inside' (inclusion and exclusion) cannot be reduced to a binary dichotomy. Both forms make people part of a homogeneous and unifying whole that explains nothing in itself, but rather is constantly being redefined. Agamben calls this the 'inclusive exclusion' of bare life with the social form of life (*bios*). In the terms used by French philosopher Alain Badiou: 'being human' has become here an intensional collection characterized by the unifying and reducible principle of citizenship. In the process human rights conceal from us those individuals and groups who are not represented by these rights, that is to say people whose legal status has not fully been resolved. In Roman times, the *homo sacer* could not, under any circumstances, live in the city of the citizens. He was driven out (like the illegal refugee today) to the margins or the 'black holes' of society, situated far from the sight of the average city dweller. Today the refugee also appears as a *margizen*, whose life is qualitatively distinct from that of the *citizen* and of a temporary resident (*denizen*).[4] He or she is a person who has no access to the collective goods and services of our society (security, insurance, work, etcetera).[5]

The figure of *homo sacer* leads to many misunderstandings. Isn't everyone a *homo sacer*: criminals, gays, squatters, the mentally handicapped, feminists, the unemployed, beggars, the homeless, addicts, artists? Even American neo-Republicans, Slavoj Žižek once told his audience, refer, to Agamben's great chagrin, to the fact that they lead a life that is steadily being marginalized. Although Agamben writes that 'today a clear figure of the

4. A *denizen* is a person who maintains close links with a country without being a citizen of it. Not only does he or she live there, he or she also speaks its language, has had children there, has a job or goes to school there. Until the nineteenth century the term was used for a foreigner who was assigned the status of a subject by the king through 'letters of charter'. The longer they remained legally in the country the more rights these persons obtained, becoming *semi-citizens* or *denizens*. Ultimately *denizens* had fewer rights than citizens but more rights than foreigners.

5. Marc Schuilenburg, 'Citizenship Revisited: Denizens and Margizens', *Peace Review – A Journal of Social Justice*, 20, 3, 2008, forthcoming.

homo sacer no longer exists', he names several concrete examples of what he means by 'bare life' in his unfinished series of works devoted to the figure of the *homo sacer*. In addition to the refugee, he talks about the issue of euthanasia and the fate of coma patients. And in *State of Exception* he addresses the position of captured Taliban fighters at Guantánamo Bay.[6] With powerful words he equates the legal position of the Jews in the concentration camps with those of the 'detainees' of Guantánamo, who are being held without any form of trial and without charge. The prisoners have the status of 'enemy combatants', a category that does not exist in international law, so that they are not covered by the Geneva Convention on the protection and treatment of prisoners of war.

6. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 3-4.

What now? In 'Beyond Human Rights' the phrase 'a coming political community' is formulated, a notion that Agamben had already cautiously addressed in his article about the student uprising at Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1989.[7] What this community looks like remains very vague. It is clear, however, that Agamben, in the parts of the *homo sacer* cycle that have yet to be published, intends to make it a field of study, a potentiality that breaks through the prevailing order and coherence and makes a connection to other elements, 'beyond' the point at which every living being is turned into a controlled and manageable object.

7. Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 85-87.

Giorgio Agamben

Beyond Human Rights

In 1943, Hannah Arendt published an article titled 'We Refugees' in a small English-language Jewish publication, the *Menorab journal*. At the end of this brief but significant piece of writing, after having polemically sketched the portrait of Mr. Cohn, the assimilated Jew who, after having been 150 percent German, 150 percent Viennese, 150 percent French, must bitterly realize in the end that 'on ne parvient pas deux fois,' she turns the condition of countryless refugee – a condition she herself was living – upside down in order to present it as the paradigm of a new historical consciousness. The refugees who have lost all rights and who, however, no longer want to be assimilated at all costs in a new national identity, but want instead to contemplate lucidly their condition, receive in exchange for assured unpopularity a priceless advantage: 'History is no longer a closed book to them and politics is no longer the privilege of Gentiles. They know that the outlawing of the Jewish people of Europe has been followed closely by the outlawing of most European nations. Refugees driven from country to country represent the vanguard of their peoples.'[1]

1. Hannah Arendt, 'We Refugees', *Menorah Journal*, no.1 (1943), 77.

One ought to reflect on the meaning of this analysis, which after fifty years has lost none of its relevance. It is not only the case that the problem presents itself inside and outside of Europe with just as much urgency as then. It is also the case that, given the by now unstoppable decline of the nation-state and the general corrosion of traditional political-juridical categories, the refugee is perhaps the only thinkable figure for the people of our time and the only category in which one may see today – at least until the process of dissolution of the nation-state and of its sovereignty has achieved full completion – the forms and limits of a coming political community. It is even possible that, if we want to be equal to the absolutely new tasks ahead, we will have to abandon decidedly, without reservation, the fundamental concepts through which we have so far represented the subjects of the political (Man, the Citizen and its rights, but also the sovereign people, the worker, and so forth) and build our political philosophy anew starting from the one and only figure of the refugee.

The first appearance of refugees as a mass phenomenon took place at the end of World War I, when the fall of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires, along with the new order created by the peace treaties,

upset profoundly the demographic and territorial constitution of Central Eastern Europe. In a short period, 1.5 million White Russians, seven hundred thousand Armenians, five hundred thousand Bulgarians, a million Greeks, and hundreds of thousands of Germans, Hungarians, and Romanians left their countries. To these moving masses, one needs to add the explosive situation determined by the fact that about 30 percent of the population in the new states created by the peace treaties on the model of the nation-state (Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, for example), was constituted by minorities that had to be safeguarded by a series of international treaties – the so-called Minority Treaties – which very often were not enforced. A few years later, the racial laws in Germany and the civil war in Spain dispersed throughout Europe a new and important contingent of refugees.

We are used to distinguishing between refugees and stateless people, but this distinction was not then as simple as it may seem at first glance, nor is it even today. From the beginning, many refugees, who were not technically stateless, preferred to become such rather than return to their country. (This was the case with the Polish and Romanian Jews who were in France or Germany at the end of the war, and today it is the case with those who are politically persecuted or for whom returning to their countries would mean putting their own survival at risk.) On the other hand, Russian, Armenian, and Hungarian refugees were promptly denationalized by the new Turkish and Soviet governments. It is important to note how, starting with World War I, many European states began to pass laws allowing the denaturalization and denationalization of their own citizens: France was first, in 1915, with regard to naturalized citizens of 'enemy origin'; in 1922, Belgium followed this example by revoking the naturalization of those citizens who had committed 'antinational' acts during the war; in 1926, the Italian Fascist regime passed an analogous law with regard to citizens who had shown themselves 'undeserving of Italian citizenship'; in 1933, it was Austria's turn; and so on, until in 1935 the Nuremberg Laws divided German citizens into citizens with full rights and citizens without political rights. Such laws – and the mass statelessness resulting from them – mark a decisive turn in the life of the modern nation-state as well as its definitive emancipation from naive notions of the citizen and a people.

This is not the place to retrace the history of the various international organizations through which single states, the League of Nations, and later, the United Nations have tried to face the refugee problem, from the Nansen Bureau for the Russian and Armenian refugees (1921) to the High Commission for Refugees from Germany (1936) to the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees (1938) to the UN's International Refugee Organization (1946) to the present Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (1951), whose activity, according to its statute, does not have a political character but rather only a 'social and

humanitarian' one. What is essential is that each and every time refugees no longer represent individual cases but rather a mass phenomenon (as was the case between the two world wars and is now once again), these organizations as well as the single states – all the solemn evocations of the inalienable rights of human beings notwithstanding – have proved to be absolutely incapable not only of solving the problem but also of facing it in an adequate manner. The whole question, therefore, was handed over to humanitarian organizations and to the police.

The reasons for such impotence lie not only in the selfishness and blindness of bureaucratic apparatuses, but also in the very ambiguity of the fundamental notions regulating the inscription of the *native* (that is, of life) in the juridical order of the nation-state. Hannah Arendt titled the chapter of her book *Imperialism* that concerns the refugee problem 'The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man'.[2] One should try to take seriously this formulation, which indissolubly links the fate of the Rights of Man with the fate of the modern nation-state in such a way that the waning of the latter necessarily implies the obsolescence of the former. Here the paradox is that precisely the figure that should have embodied human rights more than any other – namely, the refugee – marked instead the radical crisis of the concept. The conception of human rights based on the supposed existence of a human being as such, Arendt tells us, proves to be untenable as soon as those who profess it find themselves confronted for the first time with people who have really lost every quality and every specific relation except for the pure fact of being human.[3] In the system of the nation-state, so-called sacred and inalienable human rights are revealed to be without any protection precisely when it is no longer possible to conceive of them as rights of the citizens of a state. This is implicit, after all, in the ambiguity of the very title of the 1789 *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, in which it is unclear whether the two terms are to name two distinct realities or whether they are to form, instead, a hendiadys in which the first term is actually always already contained in the second.

2. Hannah Arendt, *Imperialism*, Part II of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951), 266-298.

3. Ibid., 290-295.

That there is no autonomous space in the political order of the nation-state for something like the pure human in itself is evident at the very least from the fact that, even in the best of cases, the status of refugee has always been considered a temporary condition that ought to lead either to naturalization or to repatriation. A stable statute for the human in itself is inconceivable in the law of the nation-state.

It is time to cease to look at all the declarations of rights from 1789 to the present day as proclamations of eternal metajuridical values aimed at binding the legislator to the respect of such values; it is time, rather, to understand them according to their real function in the modern state. Human rights, in fact, represent first of all the originary

figure for the inscription of natural naked life in the political-juridical order of the nation-state. Naked life (the human being), which in antiquity belonged to God and in the classical world was clearly distinct (*as zoe*) from political life (*bios*), comes to the forefront in the management of the state and becomes, so to speak, its earthly foundation. Nation-state means a state that makes nativity or birth [*nascita*] (that is, naked human life) the foundation of its own sovereignty. This is the meaning (and it is not even a hidden one) of the first three articles of the 1789 Declaration: it is only because this declaration inscribed (in articles 1 and 2) the native element in the heart of any political organization that it can firmly bind (in article 3) the principle of sovereignty to the nation (in conformity with its etymon, *native* [natío] originally meant simply 'birth' [nascita]. The fiction that is implicit here is that *birth* [*nascita*] comes into being immediately as *nation*, so that there may not be any difference between the two moments. Rights, in other words, are attributed to the human being only to the degree to which he or she is the immediately vanishing presupposition (and, in fact, the presupposition that must never come to light as such) of the citizen.

If the refugee represents such a disquieting element in the order of the nation-state, this is so primarily because, by breaking the identity between the human and the citizen and that between nativity and nationality, it brings the originary fiction of sovereignty to crisis. Single exceptions to such a principle, of course, have always existed. What is new in our time is that growing sections of humankind are no longer representable inside the nation-state – and this novelty threatens the very foundations of the latter. Inasmuch as the refugee, an apparently marginal figure, unhinges the old trinity of state-nation-territory, it deserves instead to be regarded as the central figure of our political history. We should not forget that the first camps were built in Europe as spaces for controlling refugees, and that the succession of internment camps-concentration camps-extermination camps represents a perfectly real filiation. One of the few rules the Nazis constantly obeyed throughout the course of the 'final solution' was that Jews and Gypsies could be sent to extermination camps only after having been fully denationalized (that is, after they had been stripped of even that second-class citizenship to which they had been relegated after the Nuremberg Laws). When their rights are no longer the rights of the citizen, that is when human beings are truly *sacred*, in the sense that this term used to have in the Roman law of the archaic period: doomed to death.

The concept of refugee must be resolutely separated from the concept of the 'human rights', and the right of asylum (which in any case is by now in the process of being drastically restricted in the legislation of the European states) must no longer be considered as the conceptual category

in which to inscribe the phenomenon of refugees. (One needs only to look at Agnes Heller's recent *Theses on the Right of Asylum* to realize that this cannot but lead today to awkward confusions.) The refugee should be considered for what it is, namely, nothing less than a limit-concept that at once brings a radical crisis to the principles of the nation-state and clears the way for a renewal of categories that can no longer be delayed.

Meanwhile, in fact, the phenomenon of so-called illegal immigration into the countries of the European Union has reached (and shall increasingly reach in the coming years, given the estimated twenty million immigrants from Central European countries) characteristics and proportions such that this reversal of perspective is fully justified. What industrialized countries face today is a permanently resident mass of noncitizens that do not want to be and cannot be either naturalized or repatriated. These noncitizens often have nationalities of origin, but, inasmuch as they prefer not to benefit from their own states' protection, they find themselves, as refugees, in a condition of de facto statelessness. Tomas Hammar has created the neologism of 'denizens' for these noncitizen residents, a neologism that has the merit of showing how the concept of 'citizen' is no longer adequate for describing the social-political reality of modern states.[4] On the other hand, the citizens of advanced industrial states (in the United States as well as Europe) demonstrate, through an increasing desertion of the codified instances of political participation, an evident propensity to turn into denizens, into noncitizen permanent residents, so that citizens and denizens – at least in certain social strata – are entering an area of potential indistinction. In a parallel way, xenophobic reactions and defensive mobilizations are on the rise, in conformity with the well-known principle according to which substantial assimilation in the presence of formal differences exacerbates hatred and intolerance.

Before extermination camps are reopened in Europe (something that is already starting to happen), it is necessary that the nation-states find the courage to question the very principle of the inscription of nativity as well as the trinity of state-nation-territory that is founded on that principle. It is not easy to indicate right now the ways in which all this may concretely happen. One of the options taken into consideration for solving the problem of Jerusalem is that it become – simultaneously and without any territorial partition – the capital of two different states. The paradoxical condition of reciprocal extraterritoriality (or, better yet, aterritoriality) that would thus be implied could be generalized as a model of new international relations. Instead of two national states separated by uncertain and threatening boundaries, it might be possible to imagine two political communities existing on the same region and in a condition of exodus from each other – communities

4. Tomas Hammar, *Democracy and the Nation State: Aliens, Denizens, and Citizens in a World of International Migration* (Brookfield, Vt.: Gower, 1990).

that would articulate each other via a series of reciprocal extraterritorialities in which the guiding concept would no longer be the *ius* (right) of the citizen but rather the *refugium* (refuge) of the singular. In an analogous way, we could conceive of Europe not as an impossible 'Europe of the nations', whose catastrophe one can already foresee in the short run, but rather as an aterritorial or extraterritorial space in which all the (citizen and noncitizen) residents of the European states would be in a position of exodus or refuge; the status of European would then mean the being-in-exodus of the citizen (a condition that obviously could also be one of immobility). European space would thus mark an irreducible difference between birth [*nascita*] and nation in which the old concept of people (which, as is well known, is always a minority) could again find a political meaning, thus decidedly opposing itself to the concept of nation (which has so far unduly usurped it).

This space would coincide neither with any of the homogeneous national territories nor with their *topographical* sum, but would rather act on them by articulating and perforating them *topologically* as in the Klein bottle or in the Möbius strip, where exterior and interior in-determine each other. In this new space, European cities would rediscover their ancient vocation of cities of the world by entering into a relation of reciprocal extraterritoriality.

As I write this essay, 425 Palestinians expelled by the state of Israel find themselves in a sort of no-man's-land. These men certainly constitute, according to Hannah Arendt's suggestion, 'the vanguard of their people'. But that is so not necessarily or not merely in the sense that they might form the originary nucleus of a future national state, or in the sense that they might solve the Palestinian question in a way just as insufficient as the way in which Israel has solved the Jewish question. Rather, the no-man's-land in which they are refugees has already started from this very moment to act back onto the territory of the state of Israel by perforating it and altering it in such a way that the image of that snowy mountain has become more internal to it than any other region of Eretz Israel. Only in a world in which the spaces of states have been thus perforated and topologically deformed and in which the citizen has been able to recognize the refugee that he or she is – only in such a world is the political survival of humankind today thinkable.

This English translation of the original Italian text (1993) was first published in: Giorgio Agamben, 'Means without End. Notes on Politics' in: *Theory Out of Bounds*, Vol. 20 (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

Nicoline van Harskamp

Amsterdam, 9 May 2008, 20:15/ Amsterdam, 9 May 2008, 21:15

The editors of *Open* invited visual artist Nicoline van Harskamp to submit a contribution based on the project 'Any Other Business' that she launched in May 2008 during the Tijdelijk Museum ('Temporary Museum'), an art event in Amsterdam. 'Any Other Business' took place in the De Balie centre for culture and politics and De Inkijk, the SKOR exhibition venue.
Van Harskamp examined the operation of informal public exchange and verbal interaction in the public debate. With her contribution to *Open* she aims to provide insight into whether or not this can be 'socially engineered'.

Amsterdam, 9 May 2008, 9.15 pm

Chris Keulemans — We are going to introduce ourselves.

Menno van der Veen — Right. I am the other Menno, Menno van derVeen. I often work as a moderator here in De Balie* or elsewhere. We agreed in advance that we would try to come over strongly here tonight. There are two things I enjoy in a debate: I enjoy conflict and I enjoy good conversation. And it very much depends whether you speak with politicians... They tend to be most interesting when they're at each other's throats. For the rest, I go for good conversations. I think it pretty much comes down to that. I think I mainly lead conversations that are either in the social or the political sphere. I don't do so many art discussions.

CK — Well, I was also schooled in De Balie. I moderate about two or three conversations per month, I think. I never used to moderate when I was still a programmer here but I did afterwards. The best definition of a successful topic for debate, I once heard from the author Dirk van Weelden. He said: "A good topic of debate is surveyable but complex." That is, usually, the best approach. I mostly work in the cultural sector because I'm not seeking conflict. I'm not much for polemics. But I am for thinking out loud together. Also, I don't enjoy talking with people who are in an official position. So it's hard for me to moderate good conversations with politicians.

Menno Hurenkamp — I am the other Menno. My name is Menno Hurenkamp. I used to be a programmer here and I used to... At the time, it was still a rule... There was some kind of unwritten law... My predecessor, Kees Vendrik, taught me: programmers do not moderate debates. That was non-negotiable, really. The reason for that has never been clear to me. But maybe Chris can explain it later. I did moderate debates after. But — and I start using the past tense now — I quit. I had the feeling that actually, whenever I did a debate, I got a kick out of its success. But that was a purely theatrical kick. And then I felt that I hadn't done justice to the subject. Or I felt that we hadn't reached any conclusion and then I felt it wasn't enough. In other words, I was bothered by my own modesty, as Chris would probably put it. At the moment, I work as a researcher at the University of Amsterdam and I write columns in De Groene Amsterdammer*. That is what I do.

Amsterdam, 9 May 2008, 9.15 pm

Chris Keulemans — Right. We agreed to... Oh. Right. We agreed to introduce ourselves. Menno?

Menno van der Veen — Thank you very much. I am the other Menno. I work here as a programmer. At times as a moderator, too. I also do it elsewhere in the country. For me, of course, it's the here and now that counts. In a debate, I enjoy two things. I enjoy conflict. Especially if it involves politicians. And I also enjoy good conversation. And I predominantly moderate debates that... Well, I moderate a lot of them but especially around political and social issues and a little less in the cultural sector.

CK — I work exactly in the cultural sector, most of the time. I moderate a conversation about two to three times a month. The best definition of a good conversation was given to me by the author Dirk van Weelden. He said: "A good topic of debate is surveyable but complex." And I still consider that the best definition. I'm not seeking confrontation or polemics. I most enjoy thinking out loud together. What about you, Menno?

MV — Shouldn't we head for the sea now? To the unknown territories, Chris?

CK — No. Later.

MV — Oh, that's coming later.

Menno Hurenkamp — I am the other Menno. My name is Menno Hurenkamp. In the past, I've worked here as a programmer. I didn't, by the way, moderate debates at that time. I don't know, maybe we should get back to that later. Because that wasn't... It was an unspoken thing, that a programmer didn't moderate debates.

I work as a researcher at the University of Amsterdam and I write columns in De Groene Amsterdammer*.

CK — Okay. In consultation with Nicoline, we have divided up our remaining thirty-nine minutes into three slots. Each of us will moderate one. I'll lead the first slot about the question: "What are you looking for in a debate and what is your aim in conducting it?" Menno?

MV — Yes, Chris?

CK — I umm... Whenever I engage in a debate, I ask myself the question: "Am I going to ask you about what I already know of you but what you may not necessarily want to say? Or am I going to ask you about what I don't know about you yet, which may be more exciting but also has a risk of landing in unknown territories where I don't want to be at all?" Do you recognise that dilemma?

MV — So you want... One more time. You ask whether... You ask about what you already know of someone but then they don't want to discuss that. Or you ask about what you don't know yet. So you never ask people about things that you already know about them, even though you're sure that they do actually want to talk about this?

CK — You tend to do that in the first ten minutes. Those are also the most boring minutes. And you have to move it on from there.

MV — Yes. Seems a good point to me.

CK — So? What do you choose?

MV — I...

CK — The secret or the unknown?

MV — If it's a good conversation, the unknown. It's more fun. But then we do... Of course, Menno has thrown the big veil of a moderator's own personality over it. A good conversation and the unknown are the most enjoyable for myself. Because I get to hear something new.

CK — Hmm.

MV — And it's often the case... At any rate, it's not always what the audience finds most enjoyable. Because you... Actually, that way you become a conversation partner yourself. Together with the others, you join the search for that unknown territory. And you must be pretty interesting yourself if you want to...

CK — Now we are going to divide up the conversation into three. I'll lead the first slot of thirteen minutes.

Menno and Menno, I often wonder before I begin a debate: "What am I going to do? Am I going to ask people about what I already know of them but what they may not want to tell? Or am I going to ask people about what I don't know of them in order to get to unknown territories? Maybe territories where I don't want to be at all?"

MV — Let me see if I understand you fully. Because, actually, you now make a distinction between people who you do know something about... And then you start discussing a subject with them that they don't want to deal with. Or you will look for unknown territories with people, dealing with a subject that you don't know anything about either. But what you will not do, is discuss things that you already know about, even though the people may want to talk about them very much?

CK — Well, that's what you do in the first ten minutes. But that also tends to be the most boring part. Necessary but boring. What I mean is: take a political conversation. You talk with politicians and civil servants. You know that there are things that they are not willing to say on the spot. You know that they don't want to make statements that may later be held against them.

Should you be looking for that or should you head for the unknown?

MH — Well, I am speaking from political experience, right? And according to me, the essence... In politics, you are dealing with people who, at that moment and under those circumstances, can't be expected to say anything different. Whereas you could expect from me right now that I'll say completely different things. Because those types of people are... They are... The moments when they take decisions are guided by different input than what we have in venues likes this. Here we have an audience that they feel comfortable with, in some way or another. Otherwise the audience wouldn't have come at all. They are forced to change positions at moments that are different from this type of meeting. We

CK — Yes.

MV — If you don't want such a conversation to be too much concerned with your own fascinations.

CK — You mean that if you, as a moderator, get too carried away in that search...

MV — Yes.

CK — ...and if you share in that search, you may lose contact with your audience?

MV — Yes. And then the audience will just be watching someone... Last year I lectured in interview techniques and moderation at the University of Amsterdam. I sent all the students to venues like this one. And I asked them to observe: is the audience addressed often enough? Do I understand what the debate is about? Do I understand what's going on? And very often, the moments in which the moderator was having the most fun, were also the moments...

CK — Right.

MV — ...that they were most critical of afterwards.

CK — Right, Menno? You have now retired as a moderator. But when you were still doing debates, you were mainly working in the social and political sphere. I can imagine that especially there, you search for what the politician or civil servant in front of you would rather not say in public. Because he doesn't want to get pinned down on things that he might have to do something about later.

MH — I have to admit that I was always guided by what I presumed the audience wanted to hear. I used to prepare myself with the assumptions: what do people come for? What brings them to the venue? Where... What... What are they interested in? It's some kind of complex mixture of people wanting to have a night out and wanting to be entertained. They want to see people in real life who they may normally only see in the newspaper. And they want some answers to things. And in the end... And the third issue is what I mostly ended up taking as a guideline: there are questions and they need to be answered.

CK — Give us one example?

MH — Well, yeah, purely why... Why social are making theatre.

CK — Menno?

MV — I think you've summarised the last forty-five minutes very accurately. Yes. Wasn't there an intermediate question there, Chris?

CK — Yes. Umm. But isit all theatre? Because you often engage in political discussions. You say it yourself: you love the theatrical side. But I think... Especiallypeople who are in an official position that they are also representing while they are here, taking part in a debate... I want them, also on the basis of their position to make sure that something can change.

MV — Yes. And to me, in any case, it is still an illusion that you could achieve that in such a venue. And that's because... This is funny, repeating the arguments that... The arguments are still... It doesn't even matter how you explain them.

CK — This conversation is going to be much shorter.

MV — Oh, sure, this is going to be very brief. Umm. Well, Chris, as I tried to explain to you earlier, it is because you can't expect politicians to change their viewpoints here tonight because those viewpoints have been shaped at a much earlier stage. Therefore you have to concentrate on the audience. On the dynamics. And on making a conflict visible for the audience. A conflict that exists between the politicians. But the idea that they have achieved something when they leave afterwards, that you can move on rom there, seems to me an illusion. I recall I had a really good...

CK — Menno, is that also the reason why you stopped doing it? Because you lost the illusion that you, as a moderator, can exact changes on the spot?

MH — I think I made my argument in stages last time. But now I am inclined to summarise it concisely. Umm. Yes, that was part of my reason. But...

CK — Now and then, you... As a moderator, you have had people on your stage who could go into a problem on the spot and maybe move it on a few steps.

Can you give us an example?

MH — Well, if you...

problems, whether it's education or... Why, in education, the mixing of schools isn't working out.

CK — Right.

MH — What is holding people back? What is it that stops politicians from taking decisions that facilitate what... Because if you put together a bunch of citizens, they will start mixing schools anyway. And so... But then things start going wrong. So why not take away the thresholds? That time after time... That citizen's initiatives like this can't simply spread further?

CK — The crazy thing is that in such a discussion, the people in the audience tend to also be the people who want mixed schools.

MH — Hmm.

CK — So if, indeed, you take into account what your audience wants, then that becomes the goal you're heading for.

MH — Hmm.

CK — You find yourself with an essential and topical issue. You find yourself facing politicians who do not want to say on the spot how they want to achieve things, if they want to achieve them in the first place, and tha:...

MH — Yes. No. And that... But anyway, as you just... That brings us immediately to why I dropped out, eventually.

CK — Yes.

MH — Or, at least, in this... in this field of sport. Because I experienced it as a sandbox in which I could intervene more easily from the comfort of my desk, writing an article, than to be confronted time after time with some kind of externally defined powerlessness of politicians and civil servants, who are very skilled in saying things like: "Look, we do want what you want and I agree with you and I share your worries and I find it very interesting, too, and I've seen the same thing happen in Zoetermeer* and..." And ultimately a whole jargon of apologies.

CK — Yes.

MH — And you can't even reproach those people for it, in the end. Because nine out of ten people who show up at this type of evening are, of course, not fascists.

CK — No.

CK — Something about mixed schools, or whatever?

MH — Well, look, take... Right? Take the mixed schools! Whenever you organise a meeting around that topic, the room will fill up with people who have their own ambitions regarding that. Who want to do something with it. However, the annoying thing is, you'll get people on the stage who share that wish and who come to explain how much they want that too. And who are also comfortable with explaining that. And who are, as a result, not at all shy of coming up and explaining it. Because of course they are coming to say that it isn't their fault. That the fault lies in places that they cannot reach. That the fault is with laws or policies or other political parties. And they find it more than enjoyable, actually... The more you bully them, the more you draw them to you, the more guilt falls from their shoulders, for some reason. One of the reasons, although there are more, for me to get rather tired of it all at some point, was that I sensed that in the end, you are working on some kind of laundering operation or a legitimation process or... There is a great danger of offering a platform to people who want to clear themselves.

MV — Do tell us about that kick, again?

MH — I derived... So one of the other reasons why I quit, is... Sometimes such a meeting was an incredibly hectic affair. And I used to... Yeah, I got quite a kick out of that. I found that rather satisfying. But in hindsight, I thought: "What have we learned from this?" I would think: "Well, pretty little, actually." I found that dissatisfying. Of course, it would also have been dissatisfying if it had been plain boring. Those are the two reasons why... And there's a third reason but that won't appear until somewhere in the forty-second minute.

CK — I'm intrigued.

MV — At any rate, I do have two examples for you.

CK — Yes. Go ahead.

MH – Or people who have bad intentions. They want... Well, they want...

CK – Can I just ask you a question between brackets? You've exchanged the one frustrating profession for another. Namely, as a moderator you often afterwards feel... I know that very well, myself. You feel like: "Well, okay, it may have been good theatre but it hasn't led to anything." As a columnist you often have that, too. Still, you choose being a columnist over being a moderator. Are you more effective as a columnist? Or are you simply less bothered by things?

MH – Well, if you write for De Groene Amsterdammer, you have to already be fairly modest. But umm...

MV – Well...

MH – Eventually... Yes, this is a very aesthetical answer, but eventually, when you have the feeling that what you've written satisfies your own demands, then at least that's clear.

CK – Yes.

MH – Then you don't have to be afraid that it will be tampered with straight away. I used to find it incredibly painful if you... I had managed to prepare some nice questions after slaving away the whole evening. And then... Then I actually really looked forward to seeing how people would answer them. And sometimes an answer would turn out to be as uncreative as can be. I just couldn't believe it. That was... Well, at such a moment I felt dreadful. I would think: "How can you come up with such an answer." I can't think of a good example right now but...

CK – Switch to the arts, Menno, they are much more compelling. Hey, Menno, umm... Things like this, right? Discussions like this. For example those mixed schools. You like confrontation. Polemics. You look for differences. You look for arguments. But if, as a moderator, you are given such a topic to work on, you should actually try to build a coalition on the stage. A coalition between politicians, civil servants, education people, forced on the spot, because there's an audience watching, to form an alliance that they wouldn't otherwise form. Because normally they can easily avoid each other.

MV – Yes, you should do that, really. But I think... I think that you, first of all, expect way too much of what a debate is. In the end, a

debate is, in many cases, nothing but a ritual or some kind of seance, in which people who would like to hear for once how things are, come together. So you shouldn't really expect that they... That they leave with different viewpoints than...

CK — I can't believe...

MV — ...they arrived with.

CK — I can't believe that you're saying that! I can't believe you're saying that.

MV — Well, I think that the difference between what you're saying and the horizon that is in my head at the moment, is that you almost seem to be talking about sessions. Like saying: "Okay, we want an afternoon debate and we have a number of professionals. And we sense that there is... That coalitions are possible. What if we put them on the spot five minutes before the end?" Well, these are very interesting games. You discuss them properly beforehand. For a start, nobody is allowed to shift opinions. Say, it's about money or about handing over some power. But five minutes before the end, we say: "What if you get up and say: 'Okay, I am willing to be more flexible on this viewpoint, are you in?'" Well, in that moment you have shown what is possible in the laboratory that is the debating room. But I do find that notion in itself, that a debate is most of all theatre... You want to be entertained but you also want to hear some news now and then. And you often want to go home with an idea that you haven't had before. And that is, if you look at De Balie... That's what primarily needs to happen here. You hold a debate that everybody is having. That has been held a hundred times. And...

CK — Look, the only reason why I now and then enjoy entering into debate with politicians and civil servants, is... is that... If they do speak in their role as officials if you can't get to the person but you can talk to the functionary, then they are obliged to offer a result on the night. And therefore I don't understand how you can settle for... Then maybe all three of us share the disillusion that you enter into debates about complex and urgent social issues, without the illusion that you can, on the spot...

MV — Yes, but you...

CK — ...move them forward a bit

MV — You translate the illusion of a conversation, more or less, to... Your disillusion, of course, is a disillusion about politics. And if you

MV — The first example of what your illusion... You think about very specialised sessions. That is, you set yourself up in a space with a number of civil servants. Or a number of politicians.

CK — In the afternoon.

MV — In the afternoon. And you know that they will not reach an agreement. And that they will all have to surrender something. And you arrange, preferably in advance: "Five minutes before the end, you have to deliver the goods. You hand over some money or you hand over some power." Well, at that moment, as an audience, you can see that it is indeed possible to find a certain compromise or solution. That's the first example. We will have to cut and paste it later on.

organise a debate, you don't do it like: "They're civil servants and politicians and tomorrow they're back making policies." You also invite a columnist. And you invite a scientist. And maybe....

CK — No, but what I mean with illusion... In a debate in this type of venue... I am under the illusion that what you do here is not just making theatre but also something that can actually yield something which can be cashed in afterwards at the bar and tomorrow can be put in a memo and the day after can be carried out.

MV — And do you also have the illusion that you can channel that?

CK — Yes.

MV — But wouldn't it be better, then, to get to the bar afterwards and wait for those people with a good bottle of Jack Daniels? Or what do you fancy?

CK — No. It's more my style to make myself scarce at that moment. So I've been a catalyst for a while and then I'm out of there. Because it's they who need to do the job. And I have another debate to conduct tomorrow. Menno?

MH — The dynamics of politics... We are narrowing it down now to politics, right?

CK — Yes.

MH — We do have to be clear about that, I think, otherwise...

CK — Nicoline told us to, right?

MH — Yes.

MV — Informal politics.

MH — Right? So the dynamics of politics in the widest sense, come down, in the end, to the question of power. And most politicians who show up in venues like this know that the power doesn't lie in these venues. The people here are going to vote for them. These people will, at least, consider voting for them. Politicians are extraordinarily opportunist creatures. The people who are not going to vote for them are not present here. So they don't have to persuade them. They have to placate them. They have to show that they are decent, friendly, and also a bit funny: "Quite a crazy girl." That kind of stuff. They have to...

MV — Integrity. They have to show a lot of integrity.

MH – Yes! Integrity! That is...

MV – Integrity is very important.

MH – Everyone can interpret that in their own way. The actual shifting of positions takes place either behind closed doors when the alpha male of their club decides: "We are going to do things differentlynow..."

CK – Right.

MH – ...or when Maurice de Hond* comes up with a pile of opinion polls and...

CK – And am I then being naive in thinking that precisely politicians, who, by the way, just like artists, live in and from the public domain, will also in the course of a public event like a debate...

MV – No, but you have...

CK – ...see a relevant...

MH – I think that...

CK – ...change?

MV – You are naive in the sense that that bothers you. Whilst... For example... I remember that during the time that you worked here on a temporary basis, we once had an entirely coined debate about the Schiphol Fire*.

CK – Hmm.

MV – And there were twopeople present who... Well, they exchanged some positions. The issue then was... I believe that Verdonk* had said that her staff had acted adequately, while people had been burned alive in the prison. So two politicians show up and the one says: "You have to back your staff." And the other one says: "You can't say that." I vividly remember your frustration.

CK – Hmm.

MV – And subsequently you organised a... The classical sit-in. Teach-in. Here.

CK – Yes.

MV – Well, yeah, it can, of course, work that way. But then, what counts is that you create in the room, or at least within the organisation, a sense of: "Hey, we do see that we may not be employing the right people. Maybe we could change things from the bottom up."

And thesecond example is something that you have experienced here yourself. We've had this discussion here about... You were temporary director here at the time. A discussion about the Schiphol Fire* concerning Secretary of State Verdonk*. Well, a very predictable debate took place. The predictability was in the fact that Verdonk had stated that her staff in the detention centre had acted adequately. Whereas others were saying: "Well, people have actualy died so you can hardly speak of adequate action." Anyway, the conversation didn't go beyond that. But that did lead to, let's say, from bottom up... So there was a... And then you organised a sit-in or a teach-in here. So that is something that does arise. And you can measure your success in that way, too.

CK – Yes. And...

MH – Yes, but then things happen outside, right? So the debate functions...

CK – Yes.

CK — Yes.

MV — But the notion that politicians, of all people, will shift their positions in the course of a debate, that is... That seems unlikely to me.

CK — It's odd. I said earlier: "My background is primarily in the arts." And I find myself between one Menno who stopped moderating conversations because he doesn't see the point any more and another Menno who predominantly does politics but who says: "A debate is most of all theatre." And I'm left as the only one who still believes that a debate can actually make a change in the world.

MH — No, no. Just for... Just to be clear. Menno had a good example earlier. You can actually set things in motion but you shouldn't expect it from those people at that moment. It is, of course, incredibly illustrative that... Right? So that Schiphol fire. To realise how... How strong the cynicism is. And when you see that, it works as a catalyst for...

CK — Yes.

MH — And then something will happen. So it's more about what your expectations are. You can never expect more from meetings like this one, than to see whether someone's any good or not.

CK — Yes.

MH — Whether you can or can't trust people. Whether you have the feeling that... That they are parallel with their story. In other words, whether you find their story plausible.

CK — Yes.

MH — Or whether their story just enrages you.

MV — Yeah, well, you can actually dispel things like... What you see here, for example, when the audience shows up... There are still people with a healthy distrust of parties like the SP*, for example. Or the VVD*. Like: "Well, we simply don't believe him." They may share the viewpoints. It's their own viewpoints. But simply because it's a member of the SP or the VVD... PVV* people enjoy coming here less... You don't accept it from the CDA*. So, you show up here and at some point you conclude that somebody is actually trustworthy. Well, then something does happen in the room. Because it's usually not only your own emotion. It's an emotion of many others. Well, and that's the nice thing about a debate without a fourth wall, so to speak: it rebounds onto the table and

MH — Perhaps the debate is a catalyst. But in the debate itself, nothing changes.

The debate serves as a way to enrage and activate other people or the people concerned.

then you get a really good debate.

CK — You are both helping me out now. Fully out of character, I sought a clash for a moment. Very politely, nonetheless, because that's what I'm like. But what you... The point that you are both making, is that although the speakers may not make a change to the subject we are talking about, the debate itself can indeed set a change in motion. And if I figured out that much in thirteen minutes, then that's not bad at all.

MV — Let's conclude that then, Chris.

CK — You may do slot number two, Menno.

MV — Let's get going then. This slot is a bit more about the techniques of moderation. How do you enter a debate? How do you do it? And I'll start with Chris himself. He has held back a bit because he was leading the conversation just now. And in the preparatory meeting he mentioned that what puzzles him is: "What to do with jargon?" I... He... I often lead debates that... You often lead debates in which many technical terms are used. The audience doesn't get those immediately. Are you going to explain them? Are you, every time such a term is dropped, going to address the audience and translate? Or do you let somebody speak for himself?

CK — Yes. Umm. Preferably, if somebody can talk about his trade very well, then I prefer to let him talk about that trade as precisely as possible and thus in as technical a terminology as possible. Even if I don't know all the terms myself.

MV — And why do you do that?

CK — Because I... Because then somebody is on familiar territory and you don't want to disturb him. And I myself, in any case, enjoy hearing a proper florist, to give you a random example...

I am completely blind to anything to do with nature. So that is not my territory. I enjoy listening to a proper florist who can

CK — So what you are saying is that... Because my thirteen minutes are almost up, thank god... So what you are saying is, that if you have a political debate on stage, then the political changes do not arise on the stage itself but the debate itself may change something about its subject?

MV — Umm.

CK — Twelve minutes, fifty-nine seconds. Menno. It's your turn.

MV — How did you just measure the seconds? Umm. Thank you very much. I would like to address a few technical issues. The techniques of moderation. And I'd like to start with you, Chris, because you had to be a bit more quiet earlier. So now you may speak out. And you came up with the example of jargon. What do you do with terminology that... That the audience doesn't know but is used anyway? Do you interrupt them? Or do you let it pass and... And do you also enjoy such moments? I think that's what you said before.

CK — Well, look... I love it when people can talk well about their trade. Doesn't matter which trade that is. You like that, don't you? That I enjoy that?

MH — Are we getting to the rubber band again?

MV — I think it's... I'm looking forward to the florist.

CK — Well.

MV — I really found that very beautiful. With the cuttings and... *I already know what's coming, of course.*

CK — So if people can talk well about their trade, I think that you shouldn't them do that in their own terminology. Even if these are technical terms that the audience, or you yourself, don't understand. You have to let people feel they're in a safe area, using their own vocabulary. You see, if I let a pilot talk about his profession, for example, then... I happen to be scared of flying. So I have no affinity with pilots. But if I let a pilot talk about his profession and he talks about that whole dashboard full of buttons

explain me in detail how his garden works and when he sows and when he harvests, etceters. Right down to the rubber bands that he uses to tie the flowers together when he sells them. I enjoy it when somebody speaks without being disturbed and with the least possible explanation. And when he doesn't have to make things easier than they are to him and his trade. So that is what I proposed we should do tonight, too. We are talking about a trade that we, but not many other people, share. But we should speak about it in as technical a way as possible.

in front of him.... He mentions all sorts of terms. He tells which button he touches for which atmospheric condition and which computer shows him how far it is to his destination. If he does all that in very technical terms, up to the moment of landing, wrapping up the plane, tying it with a rubber band and handing it to the lady that he just sold the plane to.... I think it's beautiful to hear that. And you shouldn't interfere with that.

MV — So? I was just anticipating three technical terms?

CK — We... No... The way that we speak now, is... We're not using words that nobody knows, but we are speaking about a trade....

MV — Yes, that's what I wanted to get at.

CK — ...that very few people practice.

MV — Because even in the way you portray a florist, you're using few technical terms. But still, you'd call that jargon? So that is what you understand jargon to be?

CK — Technical language.

MV — Let people use their own technical language to...

CK — Yes.

MV — ...within their own territory...

CK — Yes.

MV — ...explain themselves.

CK — Yes.

MV — Menno?

MH — Well, yeah... The example is yours but I'm handing it to you so you can head there yourself later on. The question.... Menno came up with the question: "In a meeting, do you lean on the strongest personality or on the person with the strongest claim? Or on the weaker person? In order to support him?" That was your question. My approach would be much cruder. In the end, I just enter with a certain issue that I suspect people came for. And yes, eventually I lead everything back to that. And ultimately, I'm not interested in whether people are shown to full advantage. The fact that you get together under political conditions makes it, by virtue

MV — Yes, I was hoping that you'd just come up with three technical terms.

CK — Well, what I actualy meant was, that the way we are now talkingabout our profession ourselves... That can bedone in technical terms. We talked about that in advance. And we can conduct our conversation the best when we are confident in speaking about our profession in our own words.

MV — But we're not using those technical terms now, are we?

CK — No. No, that's right. But then somebody starts off about politics.

MV — Menno, you were about to make a link between the statement "Who do you support?" and jargon.

MH — Well, there was a.... Look... There was a rather... I even made a rather interesting connecting step. And Chris complimented me on that so I'm going to do it again.

MV — Right. About the...

MH — It was about... You can, indeed, afford to intervene when people are being technical. Because nine times out of ten, as long as you're

of one's office, a power question, right? There simply is a question. There's...

MV — But say, we take the horizon of a debate with politicians or with civil servants. Terms such as 'section twenty-three of the constitution' or 'section seven of the constitution' will be used. There may just be somebody in the auditorium who, by chance, happens not to be carrying the constitution with him.

MH — Yes. No. I never know these things myself. So I tend to simply interrupt the sentence and say: "I want you to explain what that is for a moment. And afterwards, I want you to continue exactly where you left off." And the sort of people that I encounter, are skilled in that, too.

MV — So that means that you take people away from their zone.

CK — That's a pretty good method, by the way.

MV — Away from their comfortable zone.

MH — But...

MV — Hold on.

MH — No, no, no.

MV — Chris thinks it's quite a good method.

MH — Hold on. Stop, stop. I confirm them in their comfortable zone.

CK — Yes.

MH — I absolutely don't take them out of it. I confirm that they are on the right track. That they are onto an unbelievably interesting subject, one that they are allowed to explain even further. Also, you will see them grow as soon as they are allowed to start off about section twenty-three. They become bigger. They become... They're also not intimidated when you just indicate to them: "This is interesting, but you have to explain it." Nine times out of ten, you can afford to be fairly unsubtle.

talking with politicians, you'll find that they'll get into their story better because they feel validated when you ask them to explain what their...

CK — And what kind of technique did you use for that, again?

MH — Well, just as with the compliment... That I talk about... Right? You are talking about a dashboard: "What is a dashboard? And after that you just continue where you left off."

CK — And that's also possible with section twenty-three, or something?

MH — And so you can... Right? Section twenty-three, you can have that explained to you and through that, you can let somebody make more contact with the audience. So you can... It makes them feel that they're not being attacked but that they're being confirmed. They become bigger. And that makes the debate more comfortable.

MV — But you're taking them out of their comfortable zone, actually.

MH — No. No. You don't take them out of their comfortable zone.

CK — That's a nice technique.

MH — You don't do them wrong.

CK — No. Because you could also say: "I don't get it." Then your audience is with you. "I don't understand a thing about what you just said." Then the audience is on your side but you're cutting someone down.

MV — But Chris, you do lose your unknown territories. And you descend to the level of your audience.

CK — Again, there is a difference here between, let's say, the civil servant and the florist. The florist isn't there to defend or attack something or to make coalitions. You want to let him speak about his trade. And he probably isn't a trained speaker, either. And you can't judge whether or not he's a good speaker in public. So you let him speak in his own familiar language.

MV — But it could very well be... For example, he says: "And I also have some beautiful geraniums." And then you say: "Those are pretty little flowers." Right? That might make the guy even more enthusiastic.

CK — Yes, it may. But that is, indeed, a gamble because maybe they aren't flowers even, you know what I mean?

MH — The man recognises in Chris...

CK — I've no idea.

MH — The guy knows from a ten kilometer distance that Chris can't tell a geranium from a canary.

MV — Umm. I'd like to get back to that question: "Who do you support in a conversation?"

CK — Yes.

MV — Because I find that an important issue.

CK — Explain it to us?

MV — Let me just explain it. Umm.

MH — Otherwise we'll get too technical.

CK — You can also say: "I don't get it." Or: "I don't understand a thing about that." Then the audience is on your side. But then you belittle someone that way. You cut someone down.

MH — Yes, but I try not to do that. As I just said: "I don't do that." I have always tried not to do that.

MV — So will you, from now on, tell that pilot: "Nice, that dashboard. And what are those meters, again?" Will that be a new technique for you now?

CK — No. Because with a politician it would be functional. Whereas somebody like a pilot, who isn't used to speaking in public and who should also not be expected to be able to do that nor be held accountable for that, should be left with his own safe vocabulary. You should take him out of his own language as little as possible.

MV — Okay. Umm. Shall I bring up that "who do you support" statement?

MH — Oh!

MV — Or was there something you wanted to mention about the audience?

MH — No. Well, no, look... Why don't you clarify this statement for us? I opened it up for you but...

MV — Well, why don't you go ahead? Please. If you can, do it word by word?

MH — No. By now I'm in such a state of self-reflection that I...

MV — In a debate, you often notice that... Say, we sit at this table with politicians. That's the most obvious example. Then GroenLinks* and PvdA*, they have aheadstart in the conversation. Well, the VVD ismore or less 'hors concours' but the CDAalways has to cope with a big disadvantage. In that case, as a moderator, you can be a bit annoying, although your audience doesn't always accept that. But you can start leaning a bit on the Green person and the Labour person, in order to give the Christian Democrat an even harder time. You can also lean on the Christian Democrat. Support him. Request answers fromhim. Demand silence from other parties and other people present. In a way, tell the audience not to attack the Christian Democrat. What do you think about that?

MH — Well, you... I think that we have to be more accurate.

CK — Even more accurate?

MH — I'm borrowing Chris's terminology right now, but "agitating against your own supporters" is different from... I believe that that terminology is yours. At least, I learned it from you. That is somethingdifferent from protecting the person who, at that moment, clearly has the weakest position. Or from offering space to the person who entersthe debate with an attitude like: "I'm goingto win this conversation because I have the biggest amount of money or I have the biggest number of supporters or I'm simply right..." Right? The populist sentiment, like: "I am simply right because the opinion polls say..."

MV — Well, yeah, the one with the biggest mouth, right? Or the one who naturally has the most preponderance.

MH — Yeah, well, look... I would never be able to give you a black-and-white answer because the conversations that I used to moderate... People that I find annoying, I ignore anyhow.

MV — Right.

MH — Simply because I find them annoying. Because people who manifest themselves as nuisances... I'm just not up for them. That is...

CK — But that is, indeed, one of the most difficult things. Yes.

MH — So that makes me...

CK — Yes.

MV — With the 'who doyou support' statement in a debate, I mean that you often have a weaker and a stronger party. If, for example, you enter De Balie* then the PvdA* and GroenLinks*, actually have a headstad in the conversation. The VVD* is more or less 'hors concours'. But the CDA* has to cope with a disadvantage.

CK — A big disadvantage.

MV — A big disadvantage. And what I mean with: "Do you actually support the weaker party?", is that you don't take sides with the Greens and the Labour person in order to finish off the CDA but that youstart leaning on the Christian Democrat a bit, in order to... Some kind of harmony... To create a balance. That's what I mean with that statement.

MH — Look, according to me... Chris has described that as "agitating against your own supporters", right? Thatin itself... I find that very charming. But quite honestly, I tend to be guided more by intuition. In the end, I am never guided by who is weaker and who is stronger at all. But, yeah, you start off with a... In the end, you start off with your own brief. You have, actually, spent a preceding evening or afternoon struggling with: "What do I want to achieve?" That's what I enter the room with: "What do I want to achieve?" And in the end this is what the people present are serving. Whether you accomplish that with good grace or bad grace. And if somebody doesn't... If somebody represents the weaker party and... Well, it may very well be that I ignore him.

It may also be that I ignore somebody just because he is annoying. That there is...

MH — There's no other... I can't give you any other motivation, except that I think: "What a bully!" Or: "What a bitch!"

CK — But just a minute...

MH — Then I'm done with it!

CK — That is a marvellous phenomenon. I encounter it very regularly myself. But at that moment, in the hour and a half that it takes, it should be your 'raison d'être'.

MH — Yes. But that's...

CK — Whether you are annoyed or not, is beside the point.

MH — No. But there's...

CK — You will have to talk with him.

MH — Sure, but there's so... I mean, of course I'll make an effort to overcome that but there's no... So I start with... But I do that on purpose. By no means do I start off with a notion like: "You have to pick out the one who in some way or another..."

MV — But do you make that same bend again? Do you think: "If I find him annoying... I am thinking from the viewpoint of the audience so the audience will find him annoying as well. So I will present him as even more annoying. Ignore him. Disqualify him."

MH — No, no, no. But there is a difference. Because you could also start to bully someone who is annoying you. I don't do that. I'm not up for that. But I suspect... I tend to think that I normally coincide with the audience, more or less. Right? So in the end, I am a little bit of a... You have to be a bit of a populist, in my opinion. I do actually assume, more or less, that the person that I perceive as aggravating...

MV — Actually is aggravating.

MH — At that moment, that's an objective fact.

CK — But you, Menno, are a funny kind of programmer and moderator. Because you are from a generation where it is allowed to do both. For me and Menno, indeed, it wasn't allowed.

MH — And why wasn't it, actually? Just one second.

CK — I am very much in favour of it as well. But we'll come to that later. Because...

CK — But that's out of the question, right? Because you are... in the hour and a half that the debate takes, your 'raison d'être' is that you talk with everyone. Whether you are annoyed by him or not. That is beside the point.

MH — Sure, I am aware of that. But that's the way things are, right? Sometimes I'm just genuinely annoyed. And then it's fairly difficult to... I find it difficult to avoid that. And I don't mind that very much, either, because...

But I tend to think that I more or less coincide with the audience. I assume that if I find him annoying, then the audience will pretty much feel the same thing. And so... Yes, that will hinder that person.

MV — You somewhat resemble a populist.

MH — I have a bit of a populist streak. Yes. There is a populist side to that, as far as I'm concerned. Yes.

MH — Because that is my subject, isn't it?

CK — Umm.

MH — Sorry about that.

CK — You take great pleasure in rubbing your audience up the wrong way. Especially here. It makes a lot of sense that most people here are, in fact, for the PvdA and GroenLinks and not for the CDA. In my opinion, you tend to be a bit irritating towards that audience and to cosy up nicely to the Christian Democrat.

MV — Well...

CK — There's an idea underlying that.

MV — Nice, the way you take over the conversation. Umm. But I consider people... I never consider viewpoints to be stupid. Now and then I find people stupid. But I think that if you are talking at the level of the CDA or the VVD... There is, of course, always an ideology behind that. A tradition of thought. There are seventy more debating venues behind that. And the tendency here to... In any conversation, really... You have, of course, the tendency to say that the person that you agree with is also the cleverest one. And I do like to defy that. Because that's hardly ever the case. In the Netherlands, we don't have a political culture as such. We're not that used to saying: "You have put that into words most intelligently but you are wrong." Something that does exist in the countries that surround us.

MH — I do find some viewpoints really very ignorant.

MV — Yes. I realise that.

MH — No, but... But simply annoyingly ignorant, also. Take the entire phenomenon now, that our country is supposed to be on the verge of a crisis. Just mentioning it to you makes me angry. I find that ignorant. I also find that... You have to... As a democracy-loving moderator or conversation partner, you simply are, in my opinion, obliged to act against that. Umm.

CK — You, Menno, are a moderator who rubs up his audience the wrong way, I think. Who makes things difficult. Who frustrates things. Because, when you are here in De Balie and there are PvdA and GroenLinks people on stage, you... Then you actually take sides with the Christian Democrats. You attack the very people that your audience expects you to be in favour of.

MV — Yes. Well, no. Because I simply believe that stupid viewpoints don't exist. The CDA viewpoints also evolved from seventy venues and debates like this one. So the polarity that exists in the room is not the polarity between clever and ignorant. And what you see, at times, is that the audience starts thinking: "I agree with him because he has the cleverest point of view." Well, I often resist that thought. That isn't very Dutch. In the countries that surround us, that is much more accepted. But you can also disagree with the viewpoint that's most intelligently put.

MH — Well... There actually are incredibly many ignorant viewpoints! No, but that... Listen, you have... As a moderator, you have, in the end, a democratic duty. Or you have... In the end, you are part of the process. And the whole assumption that this country is on the verge of a crisis... I find that so aggravating. I have no intention to engage with that. No way. I don't come onto the stage with that. I think it's objectionable if you do. Then you don't... You don't take your responsibilities all that seriously. There are already enough ignorant standpoints.

MV — Umm.

MH — There was a sneer in that.

CK — Yes.

MV — Yes.

CK — But you'd rather not repeat that, would you?

MH – I'd rather not repeat that. But, indeed, the core of it was...

CK – The funny thing is that I see a question here in my notes that we haven't dealt with yet. And since we're going way too fast anyway and will never be able to fill our forty-five minutes...

MV – Won't we?

CK – ...I would like to bring it up for a moment: "Which non-verbal qualities should a moderator master?"

MH – You have to be able to be very much present. You can't be invisible at any moment.

CK – The opposite, actually, I would say.

MH – You have to be invisibly visible. Even your invisibility has to be physically perceptible.

MV – Right, well now I understand where I got those sneers from. Because this way...

MH – No, no! Also your modesty has to be extremely immodest. You have to make yourself small in a completely broad way. You have to make it clear that you...

CK – And so you have to do that physically, as well?

MH – Yes.

CK – We are talking about non-verbal qualities.

MH – Yes. So you have to... That is, you have to practice that, to make your invisibility visible to the audience.

MV – Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MH – That people can see that you don't want to be present. Or in fact very present. But that is the essence of it.

CK – Menno, non-verbal qualities?

MV – I would say, first of all, that you have to watch, watch, watch. And that's also the smartest thing, I think. You have to watch the audience.

CK – Yes.

MV – You have to know whether there are any questions. You must have seen, especially if you don't expect your audience to... Because audiences are pretty tame and not very articulate these days...

CK — This audience certainly.

MV — And if you don't expect... If you don't give them the opportunity to respond at once, you have to make sure that you've been watching for where the difficulties are and who was nodding. That's incredibly difficult. To me, that seems... I would put that on top of my list. You?

CK — Yes. I tend to sit at the head of the table, because from there you can keep an eye on everyone at the table and in the audience at the same time. Because you have to keep a continual eye on whether something's going on there. I find... What strikes me with you, when you lead a conversation, is that you don't think that much about your posture. It seems to me that you're not that concerned about it. You are incredibly alert and you're completely with it mentally but you forget your posture. I think that you should... That you shouldn't... You shouldn't sit so listlessly or that kind of thing. Because you should radiate nothing but attention and concentration. Also in those moments, where you are lost in thought.

MV — Yes. Very nice that you make such a personal story out of it. Umm. But my answer is the very opposite. Namely, I simply have a somewhat miserable posture and a somewhat miserable locomotion. So whenever I get the chance to... I am, for example, the kind of person that has to speak from behind a lectern because otherwise I am eating my pen all the time. So I am, actually, somebody who has to consider that very much in advance. Because it's in my nature to sag a little when I sit. And then I sense that I have found that perfect triangle... That's a professional term right? Your shoulders, your head... I believe that I have the triangle and then I sag and then I think: "Oh. Right." And before you know it, you spend the entire evening... But I only have two minutes left, Chris!

CK — Yes. Exactly.

MV — So...

CK — Back to where we were.

MV — I would like to move to the... Let's get back a moment to the large personality and the thin personality, in the metaphorical sense.

MH — And this is where I take over, right? Shall I just bridge this, then?

MV — Yes. Chris could only just mention that he finds it very remarkable that if you only have

MV — I only have two minutes left so I would like to move to large people and thin people.

Can you tell us about... You make a distinction between large moderators and thin moderators, in the metaphorical sense, by the way.

CK — That's a... That is an odd move, Menno. You say: "I only have two minutes left so I would like to talk about large and thin people." They don't get that.

MV — No, that doesn't make sense.

MH — This moderator will quietly let the other two hammer each other. Umm. I will use the notion and I will also fluidly move onto my own...

MV — If you're capable of it? Sure. Doesn't seem easy to me, Menno.

MH — I happen to be very capable of that. Umm. From my own observations it seems that there are two types of people that lead public meetings. Theatrical characters. Characters with their own charisma. And people who are good at making others shine. And who themselves, actually, only have ambitions through the others. Right? "If the others shine, I am happy." These people are, in the end, directors rather than actors. In our e-mail correspondence, I have incidentally called them 'thin personalities' and 'large personalities'. Large personalities are people with distinctive characteristics. They don't need to make too much of an effort to be visible. Probably, they're visible anyhow because you see them more often. You know them from the media or you know them from other public appearances. And they carry... They have some kind of aura and the others, they're also allowed to partake of it. And it's lovely for other people to be allowed to stand in the aura of the large personality. It pushes the meeting up a level, no matter what. I recall... I once witnessed an unbelievably boring conversation between Ad Melkert* – and when I mention his name, you're halfway asleep already – and Hans Dijkstal*. Right, Chris is fast asleep by now. But Felix Rottenberg* was leading the conversation and it was about all the fuss around the social security system. De Balie is more or less built on moaning about the social security system. But that meeting was fantastic! If only for the fact, that Rottenberg was damned if he would sit down. Even though he was explicitly requested, several times, to do so by the two other participants. But he wasn't up for that. He paced back and forth with that type of nervousness... It's probably not real. Maybe it is real, who knows, but it's hard to affect it. And at some point he managed... In that unbelievably soporific conversation, he positioned himself directly behind Ad Melkert, who was sitting completely slumped in his chair... And Melkert didn't know where Felix was and he was... Right? You could see...

two minutes left that you then start talking about large and thin and... Well, whatever.

CK — Oh. Right. "I only have two minutes left so we are going to talk about large and thin people." That was a bit of a weird sentence.

MH — Yes. You see, I have... In our preparatory e-mail correspondence, I used those terms. I am not sure if they really express precisely what I intended to say with them. But the thing is... Well, it's to do with why I eventually don't do it myself anymore. It is, let's say, the third reason why I've stopped doing this. There are approximately two ways of doing this type of thing, I would say. You have people with a powerful aura that other people are allowed to partake in. That discussion partners can share. And this warms them up and they enjoy being there. That is the moderator who... Well, he himself is a..., Probably, nine times out of ten, he is a public personality. Or known as such and in some way or another able to make others shine. That's what I have called the "large personality". Who can afford quite a lot. Who doesn't need to pose very clever questions or very well-timed questions, per se. Who is what he is. Often, that is very pleasant to watch. Look, I'll just copy that example. Because actually, that was... That simply was a beautiful example. There was a meeting here in De Balie about the social security system. This building is kept going by debates about social security. No mistake about it. So many debates about social security have been organised here, you really don't want to know.

CK — Fuss around the social security system.

MH — Fuss around the social security system. It was an unbelievably boring debate. I truly don't remember a single thing about it. Ad Melkert* took part. I only have to mention his name and you start dozing off. And there was also Hans Dijkstal*. That's really... Those were different times.

CK — I'm fast asleep by now, you know?

MH — Chris is fast asleep by now. Umm. And Felix Rottenberg* was leading the discussion. It started with him refusing to sit down. The other

men tried to get him to sit on his chair, but he didn't want to do that at all. He was walking around and he got that nervous thing going. It's in his nature. But you can never quite tell whether he's acting or not because he can make also it very procuctive. So he was walking around a bit nervously and actually most of the time he was staying behind the backs of the conversation partners. And those types of men don't like that. That they can't see...

MV — They had asked him to keep standing, hadn't they? The other conversation partners?

MH — No, they had asked him to sit down.

MV — Yes.

MH — Yes.

MV — No, just to clarify...

MH — Thank you very much.

MV — A thin question.

MH — And umm... You could tell that they were bothered by... They were bothered physically... Physically bothered by the fact that... Well, the man was moving behind their backs. They didn't like that. And especially Melkert felt threatened by that. And he doesn't have eyes in the back of his head so he... And Rottenberg managed to move, while talking, increasingly out of Melkert's field of vision. And you could see how Melkert, who already has a somewhat sagging physique, was sinking deeper and deeper into his chair. Searching for protection, right? Poker players also sit with their backs to the wall. Anyway... Mustn't elaborate. Umm. And it was brilliant to see that, at the moment that Melkert felt most threatened, Rottenberg, out of nowhere, put both hands on Melkert's shoulders. And he cringed. He was completely contorted. And the next day, of course, all that's gone. The entire humiliation has vanished. But at that moment, it was briefly visible for the audience: "Look, this is nothing but a politician with an opinion. And look how easy it is to completely put him off." Because for a moment he was simply forced to admit: "Yes. No. He hadn't approached everything all that well and actually some stupid mistakes were made..." That is a Teflon-man. So he shakes that off, next. And he's rid of that as well. And that is the large personality.

CK — Hmm.

MV — Yes.

He was physically scared. And Felix was right behind him. No eyes in the back of his head. Alas! Otherwise he would still be in parliament. Anyhow... So he didn't see a thing. So his anxiety was heightening and at that moment... Sure, Rottenberg, there's a lot you can say against him but... Truly brilliant... At that moment, he simply puts both hands on Melkert's shoulders. Well, the poor man was completely... He didn't know where to put himself. He was gone! I can't remember a single word of that meeting, but that... And that's what I call a 'large personality'. That is fantastic.

MV — But please go back to the distinction between theater and... And Chris's aims? The aim to have achieved something afterwards?

MH — But here they flow into each other! Because what Rottenberg shows is the vulnerability of a politician. The man Melkert returns to parliament the next day and he's let this go. They are personalities made of... What do you call that stuff? Teflon. Right? Nothing sticks to them. In the end, they aren't... At that moment, he is distressed and shown naked and the people in the auditorium have seen: "See, these are very vulnerable figures." In the end, he just goes on and simply does whatever he thinks is necessary. But for a brief moment you've been able to see: "That's how politics work. That's what these little men are made of. You can, indeed, make a fool of them." But you

also only get to see something that isn't of any further importance for politics. Anyway, that's what a large personality is. It's very hard to learn, I think. You can practice it a bit but it's very hard to do. Umm. And there are thin personalities. And I quit because I considered myself too much of that type and because it literally took me too much time to do what a thin personality needs to do, namely make very decent preparations and make sure that you know very well what you're talking about. Know it so well, that with the person in front of you, you can set up a conversation in which they can shine and with which the audience is satisfied, too. So that brings me more or less to my own... To my own slot.

MV — I would like to get to a conclusion with the first slot, if possible.

MH — Yes?

MV — There are large personalities and thin personalities. Both are fine. But a thin personality, as far as you're concerned, has to do too much hard work.

MH — No, a thin one can only survive through too much hard work. And because I want to do more things besides leading conversations, I didn't do it.

MV — Yes.

MH — But a thin one... Simply somebody who is what he is, so to speak... An honest journalist. He has to rely on his skill and that... Yes, that takes up a lot of time.

MV — Hmm.

MH — And I'm not saying that... It's not because of idleness that I didn't feel like it. It's just that... I had other priorities. If I want to do this to my own satisfaction, I have to sit down at least a day for a meeting of an hour and a half, two hours. Or more. Just to read the files. To see who will be present. To see what they have said before. And to relate to them in a way that... I don't feel like saying in a public meeting: "I don't

MH — He is capable of that.

MV — And can you now say something about the thin personality?

MH — And the thin personality, and that concerns myself a bit more, I think, isn't capable of that. Or shouldn't want to be capable of that. He should make proper preparations. He has to devote a full day or more. Or a day and a half. He has to be... He has to, I think, know all the files. He has to know what people are going to say and to be able to anticipate that. And simply understand the material. He can less afford to do tricks and make theatre. He is, rather, nothing but a classical journalist. That is the distinction that I wanted to indicate.

MV — That was too much hard work for you, I believe?

MH — Well, given the other things that I also wanted to do, I thought... I considered myself... According to my own criteria I just wasn't good enough. Or it was too dissatisfying. And I thought: "Well, okay, I'll drop it for now."

MV — You know what I find fascinating? Just a minute, Chris, you also had the chance to say what you didn't say last time. Menno, you introduced this monologue with a really nice meta-discussion, like: "Wasn't this my slot?"

CK — Oh. Right.

MV — I believe I tried a few times: "Well, this in itself is the final question on large–thin." But you claimed: "No, this is my slot."

CK — Right. And subsequently, for a thin personality, you held a pretty long...

MV — Introduction.

CK — ...monologue.

MV — Exactly. That's what we thought. We don't want to... Usually we leave this for the café or the bar, Menno. But we sensed that you were holding a monologue, rather than moderating a conversation.

MH — Yes. But I took the liberty to enrich your language and to... So I have to make sure that that gets across with the audience well. So.

CK — Well, it most of all proves that...

MH — I wanted to... I actually wanted to clearly define that.

understand." That embarrasses me. I don't want to have to say: "Please explain that again." That people can see that I don't get it. You can say it on behalf of your audience, of course, but...

MV — Sure, sure. So that's almost...

CK — Large personalities can afford to do that.

MH — They are untouchable!

CK — They can easily afford to say: "I don't understand."

MH — Because... Because people are not all that interested in coming and seeing Menno Hurenkamp.

MV — I do think that you were the only one with a message here tonight. I think that when people leave, that the only thing that they'll remember, is that these are large and thin...

CK — Yes. And that is why you lead conversations. So that people go home with a new idea in their heads.

MV — Yes! That's what I'm here for. Not for those deserts of yours.

MH — Umm. Well, you see, it brought me... This story brought me... It was actually intrinsically motivated. It brought me to the question: "When does or doesn't a public debate make sense?"

MV — I understand.

MH — Umm. I find this important enough to repeat it once again. Umm. Look, whether you want something new...

CK — No, no. You've already just said that.

MV — Chris, don't cover up your mouth when you say something like that.

MH — Whether you went to hear something new or something unknown, in my view, and that's my own observation, it does thrive better in contexts when you have a very large personality, or when... Let's... A debate is more than three people?

CK — Yes.

MH — Plus a moderator?

CK — Yes.

MH — Right? So it thrives better when one or two people can extensively develop their point and can do that without the risk of being interrupted by some kind of so-called smart question, rather than in the type of debates where people are talking all at once and where you neither get to hear anything new in the end nor reach any surprising insights. Umm. Well, and so on.

MV — Well, yeah, as if technique is all that matters. I don't hear you say: "Who cares what I stand for? I'll just make a scenario and I'll plan it all out and everything will be all right.

CK — Hmm.

MV — So I keep an eye on the time...

CK — That is...

MV — Yes. And I think it's strange that you implicate precisely the example of political discussion in that. Because I think that a political discussion... I do agree with you when you say: "Okay, you take two scientists, let them do a column, pose a few questions, if need be let them have an honest conversation and then move to the audience." But political discussions exist exactly by the grace of conflict. They take shape precisely through a debate.

MV — ...and I make sure that people have their say...

CK — Exactly. Because that is, in my opinion, another essential difference between the large one and the thin one, that you haven't mentioned yet. A large one has a viewpoint of his own and may even be known for having that viewpoint. And is recognised as a participant in the debate. And a thin moderator isn't. It's also not the type that takes part in the debate himself. He is nothing but a traffic warden, almost.

MH — Traffic warden... Well... You do need skills for that.

CK — Hmm.

MH — It absolutely isn't... I don't mean to be disparaging.

MV — No, you're not doing it an injustice. No.

MH — That...

MV — You're not attacking anyone.

MH — No, but I didn't...

CK — No, but...

MH — I'm quite happy to start bullying you, you know? That isn't... I didn't intend to... That wasn't the distinction I wanted to make.

MV — But just go back once again to the florist, Chris. I'm pretty much on the case right now.

CK — But he is the moderator now, isn't he?

MV — Yes. Can he... Can Chris make just one more comment?

MH — No, let me do it. I'll do it. Look. There's a little question in front of me, namely, whether the type of conversation that we're talking about now is effective when it comes to political exchanges.

CK — Hmm.

MH — Actually, that question has already been answered: it depends on the level at which you want to consider something as political exchange. It's very effective when you're having a political conversation. It's not at all effective, totally ineffective, if you want to solve a problem. That's really a complete illusion.

And the reasons behind why you would have to be a large personality per se, why you can't just keep an eye on the time and say: "Gentlemen, five minutes left," weren't clear to me.

MH — No, no, no.

CK — That makes you some kind of traffic warden.

MH — But don't get me wrong.

MV — Yes?

MH — Don't get me wrong. Look, it's also... That's also a skill. I absolutely didn't mean to repudiate it. I only said: "In as much as public debate is theatre, you need a large personality to moderate it. And when you don't want it to be that, you need to approach it very skilfully in order to make something of it. To do it well." Well, so that takes up a fair amount of time. And that...

MV — But then, you also seemed to imply...

MH — No, but...

MV — ...that thin people...

MH — The normative... I want to get rid of the normative. Because of the Rottenberg example... Rottenberg, who, to me, is the classic, the one and only and the definite number one in this type of... Right? Because of that example, you arrive at a normative judgement. And that's... No, that was not really my intention. I should have worded it differently.

CK — Thin is good as well?

MH — Yes, in a different context, thin is also brilliant, of course.

CK — Hmm.

MH — So let me emphasise one more time, that I also could have used skilful versus theatrical.

MV — No, because you made a move at some point and then it seemed as if thin personalities can be large when it comes to a particular topic. And you said: "You'd have to be very knowledgable as an interviewer..."

CK — Hmm.

MH — Here... What you see here... Ladies and gentlemen, you find yourself in the theatre of illusions. They may be very pleasant illusions, at times but you do have to be able to define what these illusions are. So I would say, and you may or may not relate to this: "No, this type of meeting is not suitable for a political exchange where people have higher expectations than mere theatre." And therefore it requires large rather than thin personalities. And let me take the position, just for argument's sake, that thin personalities simply have to practice classic journalism. A dialogue. Two people. Not a debate but a dialogue. Somebody gives a lecture and is then interviewed. That type of public demonstration is fine for thin personalities. Debates with several people who are intrinsically unmanageable... Well, then you need large personalities if you want it to be worth the effort.

CK — For a thin moderator, that was an enormous introduction.

MV — Hmm.

CK — That's what does strike me.

MV — But on this subject, he is large, so to say. Because he has put a lot of thought into it.

MH — Every answer comes back like a boomerang.

CK — I still think that somebody who is on stage in the execution of his duties, is obliged to also use this time to do his job. I recently lead a conversation, of a fairly political nature, with, I believe, seven people from refugee charities and one person from the department responsible for the return and departure of migrants. So he was the bad guy in the room. Because he made sure that everybody who doesn't qualify for the 'general pardon", has to go. He was a fairly amicable man. They do know who to send to such a debate, of course. And of course, he was also the only one wearing a tie, amidst all the riffraff that normally work for refugees. And naturally, I took sides with him, outwardly at any rate, because it would have been too easy if everyone would have seen him as the agre. So I kept protecting him, approached him incredibly politely, often complimented him on how clear and thoughtful he was in explaining his duties. Which increased the aggression amongst the others. As a result, he revealed much more about his work — about the policy on returning migrants that we never get to hear of, about the exact

And then we reached a situation at this table, where people started to shift between large and thin personalities, depending on which comma was being expressed.

MH — Yes. At a certain point, that's true. Look, in relation to the asylum issue, we still have...

CK — Oh. Right.

MH — Or in relation to the stream of refugees. Then Chris is definitely a large personality.

CK — Yes.

MH — Or definitely a...

CK — Because I just told that whole story, didn't I? About that...

MH — Yes.

CK — About that meeting.

MV — With the man with the tie, right?

CK — Hmm.

MV — You supported him!

MH — But you shouldn't put Chris... You

procedures – than he would have done otherwise. So the effect was that, on the spot, a serious conversation did evolve between him and the other very well-informed refugee activists who know everything about migration law, between the one who wants to expel migrants and those who are trying to protect them, about the last opportunity that you can offer people before they board the plane. He went very far in this. So I found him to be somebody who, under difficult circumstances, indeed used his public duty in order to... Well, maybe not make a change but at least open up a possibility to people that he normally doesn't meet.

MH – You are, definitely in relation to this subject, a distinctively large personality. That would be my analysis.

CK – No, I was being very thin there.

MH – People who say that about themselves, are genuinely large.

CK – Well. Yes.

MH – But anyway, I don't want to... This isn't...

MV – Go back to the question that you started off with. Because I had...

MH – Are you still in charge?

MV – Please.

MH – What else do you still want me to say about it?

MV – You just started to... I would very much like to respond to your subject: "What can you do with such a debate? With such a political debate?" And after that we went on again about large and thin personalities. I've just forgotten what you started your slot with.

MH – Oh. No, you see... The issue is... Let's define a debate as an event with more than three people, okay?

MV – Yes.

MH – There's more than three people plus a moderator. Well, I think that that type of meeting can only be productive when you have somebody who's like a lion tamer, who also has the ambition to... Right? Who wants to... And you have to be capable of...

MV – And that's what I would call a weird viewpoint.

MH – No!

shouldn't unleash Chris on the mayoral referendum...

CK – No.

MH – ...because that will turn into a sad affair. That isn't... That simply isn't... He doesn't enjoy that himself. He can very dutifully prepare it and can surely come up with a good many questions, but it isn't going to work.

CK – No.

MH – That is not right. And then you have a thin personality in the wrong place. Umm. You can indeed be very large on certain topics and thin as far as the rest is concerned. And again, that's not prescriptive. That is only my reasoning behind: "Why don't I do it anymore?"

CK – But you've said that three times already.

MV – Yes.

CK – So that is...

MH – Yes, but that is the power of repetition!

MV — It makes me think: "Weren't you there for the audience?" And I am happy enough that the audience is there. That it participates in the democracy. That it sees what is going on. So even when you areengaged in a relatively minimal and somewhat relaxed way, the audience can still seein real time and live — or whatever words you want to use for this — what the conflicts are. What.... What belongs to a subject. And you, withyour Felix example, turn it, to my taste perhaps, too much into... It seems that theater is the only aim. As if that's the only aim that exists behind the table. Whereas... There's another aim as well, in the auditorium.

MH — No, no, no. But the reason I say this, is that... But that's my own empiricism, guided by my own experiences, because I... Given the choice between a meeting where one or two people can take their time to tell a well-informed story... A little huffish at times, but that's it... And in that case I wouldn't call it a debate, right? So I'm not saying that...

MV — No, but you were talking about politicians. Because I do agree with you that when you have two scientists and you're not very good at that and you let both of them talk for ten minutes, pose them some questions just to remind yourself of what they were talking about, and then... That often adds even less than... But politicians are, as far as I'm concerned, precisely the species that... What you think of them is also reflected in the debate. It takes place within that confrontation. And that is how you should decide on your points of view. And then I don't understand why you say: "Let those people just take turns in giving a little speech."

CK — Hmm.

MV — Or be large.

MH — Yeah, well, but I have... I can't... Well, at the risk of talking again at length, but that's... In the end, it was my intuition that lay at the bottom of my thought: "I'm just not going to do this for a while." Because I myself, also as a spectator, find it way, way too unsatisfying to have to listen to this type of conversation. And because nine times out of ten, in my experience, the argumentation doesn't exceed what I might as well read athome in the newspaper. I could do that in the comfort of my home. With a cup of coffee. And nothing nagging at my head. Because otherwise I'll end up at the bar again, with some former fellow student or other who I didn't even want to see in the first place.

MV — I sense that what you... Initially... Of course you're going against a trend. You're going against the trend that a lot of young, relatively known or unknown spunkers, soap-stars... They know nothing at all about that majoral referendum.

CK — Hmm.

MV — Let them do it. That's so refreshing...

CK — Yes. Yes.

MV — ...for that audience you're so engaged with.

CK — That's deadly.

MH — I have nothing but very conservative things to say about that. So I won't say them right now. The only opinions I have about that are very vicious ones.

CK — So what do you think about internet? And debates?

MV — Right. Do something with a blog.

MH — Umm.

MV — I'll get onto it.

MH — I am too much...

CK — He really isn't a moderator any more. You just sense it. He doesn't pose a single question, actually.

MV — No.

CK — He just has the floor.

MH — I come here with a mission and I'm going to push it through no matter what. Umm.

CK — Internet.

MV — Yes. Internet.

CK — Yes. And that's indeed the danger when you're the interviewer and you ask about things that you already know and somebody replies precisely with what you already know. Then you get a wooden conversation.

MH — Well, yeah, so that... And I... So I don't know whether this is the definitive answer.

MV — Maybe the three of us should go and search for those unknown territories, after all.

MH — Umm. Listen. Look. On my list there is one more thing that is of importance, really. Namely, the debate is relocating itself, to a large degree. A lot of discourse takes place — everybody here probably also takes part in that — in internet-like affairs where you can intervene fairly directly and fairly anonymously. You can actually take part and the same time actually remain relatively undamaged. These types of meetings can only compete if they really are different. If they really are culturally richer, in the broadest sense. Informative. And again, I see that as a confirmation of my statement... There's too much risk of very average meetings... You shouldn't try to do a weblog. Right? Talk back and forth but then live. I find that tiresome. I tend to think: "Rather not." I want to either see justice being done to people or study things at home at my leisure. Or somewhere else. In a café or wherever.

CK — But I still think that...

MH — And so... Right? That phenomenon... I feel that all these electronic debates are underlining that.

CK — Hmm.

MH — That's my impression.

CK — Well, to me, it most of all underlines the fact that the art form of the live debate is still valuable. If only as... The motivations that you all mentioned tonight: theater, checking if somebody is good or not, checking how somebody relates to others. Umm. The difference between a large and a thin personality at work. They are all things that you can't experience anywhere else except in a venue like this. And what we are suffering from now in the Netherlands, with the internet fora and the style of speaking on television, is that these days everyone sitting in these venues thinks that they constantly have to jump in and interrupt one another as.

MH — Well, what... One of the things that, let's say, makes the average debate so vulnerable, is that there are very many other fora in which people can express their opinions fairly easily. And anonymously, too, most of the time. They can do that with much less risk than in this type of meeting. And that creates a type of atmosphere in the public debate — so the fact that you can shout so much on the internet — that makes it even more important to make the best of the classic public debate. The coffee house debate.

CK — Oh.

MV — Chris, you are now going to say something beautiful about the profession, I think.

CK — Yes. About why I believe that the art form of public debate is still of importance, also these days. Because what I often experience in this country when I moderate a debate somewhere... These days, people act as if everything is television. So they act as if... They are so articulate and sharp...

MV — Because with television the audience can always say something back?

CK — Well, a public debate isn't television. But now, wherever I go, there tend to be people who... They all have an opinion, they all have something to shout and scream about, they are

loudly and quickly as they can. All over the country you see... You suddenly see debating venues where people are so improbably articulate and smart and quick and sharp and short-tempered and polemical...

MV – It hasn't struck me at all.

CK – Really extremely!

MH – No? It hasn't? Seriously?

MV – Seriously, it hasn't struck me.

MH – It hasn't?

MV – No, it really hasn't.

What does strike me is that... I recently heard Maarten Doorman say... He is a nice philosopher, in both meanings of the word. And he said...

MH – That's simply how it is, you mean?

MV – Yes. He said: "There's so much laughter. These days, you can't open your mouth... I start a philosophical argument and the first play on words brings roars of laughter."

MH – Hmm.

MV – And what he said: "That need, that is, going to a debate to get out and have a laugh," well, I acknowledge that. I see that happen quite often, too. But apart from that I also see a whole lot of people who are as quiet as a mouse. You see, a few years ago you suddenly had those classical issues again. For example, there was a new Rent Act. And in a venue like this, whatever the topic of discussion was – a meta-reflexion on moderation, for example – somebody would get up and say: "What about the new Rent Act?" But I associate that with ten years ago, or whatever, when that was a standard thing. That activists would get up and shout: "Free Tibet!" Well, I haven't seen any tonight.

MH – No, no. But on the other hand... Right? The type of audience that we have right now... They're all incredibly friendly, nice people, who...

eloquent, they are sharp. Has that ever struck you, Menno?

MV – Umm. Articulateness... Umm.

MH – I think it has.

MV – Excuse me? Oh. No, I didn't think so. But weren't you like: "It hasn't?" That's what it looked like. Umm. No, it really hasn't.

CK – No.

MV – Umm. But what I do notice... Because I know a nice philosopher, Maarten Doorman. Nice in two ways...

MH – So he too has been put aside again.

MV – And he says: "These days, audiences are very much out for having a laugh. So I enter a room and with the very first play on words the audience is in stitches. As if it's nothing but entertainment any more." I do recognise that trend. But articulateness, no.

CK – Yes. I actually do. But just like on the internet...

MH – Yes, I came to some kind of incredibly stupid conclusion but, to be honest, I've forgotten it.

MV – Have you?

MH – Yes.

CK – But we haven't.

MH – But our time's already up.

CK – Is there no time left?

MV – No, you've actually got another ten minutes to...

MH – Well, no, we have...

MV — In a certain kind of way.

MH — Who are way too civilised to do that. There is, of course... I do recognise what Chris means. The desire to... There is, of course, a deep desire within the audience, in the broadest sense of the word, to finally be heard. And that's because a number of politicians keep claiming that people aren't being heard. Umm. I have to think about this for a moment because we only have...

CK — There's a misunderstanding that many people think that conversations in venues like this, function exactly like television. You see, in the old days...

MV — When the public were allowed to say something back?

CK — Yes. No! But in the old days it often happened that people came here wanting to organise a debate just like on TV. But this type of venue is not television. Nor is it internet. But it does have its own quality and that's why I'm still in favour of performing these kinds of fabulous art pieces in this venue.

MH — But we are an artpiece now, too.

CK — Yes.

MH — My statement is...

MV — We're going to round this up. I would suggest. It's...

MH — I'm forced to round this up, really. It's nine o'clock. We can stop now. We're going to have to do this again in a few moments.

MV — At one point, each of us also started to round things up for five minutes.

CK — Yes.

MV — As if you don't grant each other the last word.

CK — We still have seven minutes left.

MH — Shouldn't we... Has the time really not run out?

CK — Seven minutes.

MH — Listen. Listen. Umm. It really was so stupid, that I simply can't...

CK — Right. But in the break, you did... You came to your senses, you said?

MH — No, I see this... No, listen, I see this as a confirmation of my entire argument. Because I am sitting at a table, arguing with two fairly like-minded people. But we're able to do thatin a way that we... This is interesting enough for me. I don't know whatthe audience thinks of it but I actually am... It is yet another confirmation, that a debate... We are absolutely not havinga debate here.

CK — No.

MH — Because I would... We are having a conversation. You certainly couldn't call thisa debate. We are talking together about a fairly small issue here.

CK — Yes.

MH — And we're doing that in a fairly controlled way. Because I've only interrupted you about two times. And for methat's quite little. I mean, that's...

CK — But as I said at the beginning: "What I most enjoy is thinking out loud together." And this is actually thinking out loud.

MH — Yes. But this absolutely isn't a debate.

CK — No.

MH — So. Right? Whatare we talking about, actually?

MV — Let there be no misunderstanding.

CK – Well...

MV – But it is informal politics? Or not even that?

MH – This is definitely informal politics.

MV – See! And that's where it all started.

CK – Are we going to say something in conclusion?

MV – I'm very glad you mentioned the coffee house. I just wanted to say that. Because I remember that I was going up the wall when you started off about internet debates and blogging. I thought: "No, that might replace café conversations, but it doesn't in fact replace these kinds of evenings."

CK – Hmm.

MV – And then you, Chris, started a beautiful story about trust and getting to know people and then you gave us a very fine enumeration – perhaps you could doit again – about why it was such a good thing to be in a venue like this. As I was thinking about that, you indicated exactly what...

CK – I really don't remember a thing about this.

MV – No? Has it all turned into one big, open plain?

CK – You know what I experience tonight? It comes to light in a painful way: when I lead a conversation, I tend to seem smarter than I am. Because as a moderator, all you have to do is... You don't have to say anything yourself. All you have to do is pose so-called clever questions. And afterwards I'm always completely empty. Really completely empty. So that's what I am experiencing now. I seem to be thicker than I am. And I honestly can't remember half of it

MV – Well, then let me say, in your spirit, that it's all these things that count. So it's about coming here and seeing the people but also about the dynamic within the debating room that can influence the conversation at the table. It is about learning to trust people that you distrusted before. And for you, I think, it also has a bit to do with, as you say... For you, what counts is... Right? Afterwards? That's why it was so nice you had the final word... What counts is the fact that it is indeed possible to achieve something and to move on a step from wher you first entered the room.

CK — I totally agree with that.

MV — Yes. I thought you would.

MH — Well, I don't agree, but I've already said five times what I think about that.

MV — Yes. And I don't agree either, but I'm going to shut up.

MH — Umm.

CK — Shall we thank each other for a very interesting discussion?

MH — Umm.

MV — Thank you very much!

De Balie — cultural and political centre in Amsterdam, known for its leftist orientation

CDA — Christian Democratic Appeal (Christian democrats)

Hans Dijkstal — leader of VVD 1998–2002

generaal pardon — legislation from 2007, granting resident permits to all undocumented people that had been in the Netherlands for over six years

De Groene Amsterdammer — leftist weekly magazine

GroenLinks — Green Left (greens)

Maurice de Hond — director of an influential opinion polling firm

Ad Melkert — leader of PvdA 1998–2002

Felix Rottenberg — former politician, media personality and co-founder of De Balie

PvdA — Labour Party (socialists)

PVV — Party for Freedom (populists)

Schiphol Fire — fire in a detention centre at Schiphol airport in November 2005, that killed eleven undocumented people

SP — Socialist Party (socialists)

Verdonk — Secretary of State with responsibilities concerning the Schiphol fire

VVD — People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (liberals)

Zoetermeer — medium-sized town in the Netherlands

The above texts are transcriptions of discussions that took place in De Balie, Amsterdam, on 9 May 2008. Artist Nicoline van Harskamp asked current and former moderators from the debating centre to conduct a discussion about their profession. With what expectations do they lead a debate? What techniques do they employ? Have public debates not become outdated? After forty-five minutes and a break, Chris Keulemans, Menno van der Veen and Menno Hurenkamp took up a big challenge: they conducted the same discussion once again, sticking as close as possible to the first version. The transcriptions, with repetitions marked, provide insight into the art of moderating a discussion and into the manufacture of political debate.

The discussion took place under the auspices of the Temporary Museum Amsterdam, as a way of launching the *Any Other Business* project. Developed by Nicoline van Harskamp in collaboration with SKOR, the project is about verbal political interaction in the Netherlands. The collected audio-visual recordings of various political discussions will be incorporated in the course of 2009 in an event and a video piece.

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column

CHARLES ESCHE

FOUNDATION 1989

I was brought up in England, a country inside a bigger state, the UK, that had been an empire within living memory. Its grandeur, fading but still apparent in the 1970s, was part of my understanding of who I was and could be. At the same time, consciousness of class and ethnicity made it clear that this state to which I belonged could not be expected to care about me in return. There were economic and social forces that excluded and undermined any appeals to loyalty. In short, I knew that the UK could never be 'on my side' in the course of my life; a knowledge embedded in my posture, voice and gesture. The best that might happen would be a temporary alignment of interests – a light mutual abuse.

When I moved to a job in Sweden, I was charmed by discovering a society where people believed that the state was on their side. Years of social democracy had persuaded many people, even given them the evidence, to see the state and their identity as largely coinciding. Personal transparency produced a successful society it seemed, one that was content with itself.

It was partly the riots in Gothenburg in 2002 that marked a change in this rhetoric. Swedes were genuinely shocked that the global movement's demonstrations against the EU leaders' meeting was violently opposed by their police. But, as a foreigner, a sense of disquiet had happened earlier. The Swedish version of social democracy was intrusive in ways I had never experienced in England. This intrusiveness went deep into personal ethics, urban planning, physical movement and demanded a certain spectrum of relatively homogeneous behaviour. I also had the impression that this system of quiet social control appeared much more visible to me, an outsider, than those educated in the system. There was a certain attraction to a parent state, an idea that it cared for life rather than made living possible. In my worst moments of despair, it seemed to reduce bodily experience to the conditions of the maternal womb, with warm, double-glazed housing and clean linoleum flooring curving clinically up the wall.

In 2004, I moved to the Netherlands, aware of its reputation and its troubles. Naturally, I found a different body in a different condition than in Sweden, though a degree of the social democratic temperature was familiar. What struck me first was the survival of what I perceived as the 1960s. 'Letting it all hang out' still appeared to have

some currency. Meetings were about telling people what you thought not building alliances, agreement was something given rather than asked. I came across pure 'autonome kunst' for the first time too, and a passion for authenticity that reminded me of the hippies seeking to find themselves in the high mountains of the Afghan trail.

Yet, just as in Sweden, my initial enthusiastic curiosity was inevitably tempered by some realizations that all was not well with the 1960s model. The political consequences of social democratic failure were obvious from before I arrived, but socially – bodily – gestures appeared out of scale. Maybe the lack of self-conscious identity was suddenly imagined to be a weakness rather than a strength and over-compensated. It is difficult for an outsider to understand it well, I think.

But one thing struck me as different. If the 1960s were still the benchmark, what happened in 1989 – the political and consequent social changes in Europe, South Africa, China – seemed unacknowledged. What for me was a change of overwhelming significance, maybe because I grew up between two ideologies in some ways, appeared here to be interpreted as a distant event of minor actual consequence.

The project 'Be(com)ing Dutch' that we began two years ago has been, in many of its facets, an observation and research into just this question – did another era start in 1989 here as well as 'over there in the former east' and, if so, what are its consequences 20 years on? The discussions and art commissions we organize certainly seek to internationalize the question by asking artists to help us see ourselves as others see us, yet the question still stays close to its particular formation in this country. Looking at the exhibition after one month, I see artists who are almost always seeking to get to grips with the question of Dutch identity, yet doing it from their own position and integrity. This often means they look at the subject in a quite literal way, giving a flavour of ethnology to their work in order to confirm Jacques Rancière's crucial insight that: 'the real must be fictionalised in order to be thought'.[1] If this is true, then it gives a role to art. While personal and social identity always remains 'in becoming', the field of action in which they 'become' is delineated in part by these fictions.

1. Jacques Rancière, *Politics and Aesthetics* (London/New York: Continuum Press, 2004).

It is the need to make visible what is taken for granted or ignored in the everyday through enlarging the details that the 'Be(com)ing Dutch' exhibition uses as its main trope. Its purpose is partly to fictionalize in order to think, but also to use the detail as a hieroglyph for the broader state of things – a device that is I think not so well understood from a pre-1989 position. In the 1960s, ges-

tures still had a certain grandeur of ideological certitude, exoticism was exciting, difference (to a degree) an attraction. If that comprehension is used to read 'Be(com)ing Dutch', it fails.

Having gone through two-thirds of the extended project, perhaps Rancière's fictions of the real, and then on a small scale, are one of the few options left to us today. They give us the possibility to come to conscious terms with the post-1989 world without resorting to grand schemes and new utopias. The most worthwhile contemporary artists are often found ploughing slowly through the many surviving fictions of that socially foundational moment in the 1960s to find out how far we have travelled and in what direction. While all history is inevitably constructed, our collective historical construction needs largely to match contemporary observations. If it falls too far out of alignment, it generates frustration and alienation. 'Be(com)ing Dutch', which should then be seen as part of a potentially wider process that goes beyond artistic expression, tries to temper that frustration by zooming in on the details and close-ups of our imagined pasts, presents and futures. Such a focus is not particularly heroic, which is probably why the exhibition counters much artistic expectation in the Netherlands.[2] In this sense the project 'Be(com)ing Dutch' remains a modest proposal for a specific reorientation of our contemporary artistic condition rather than a grand narrative. The next step – configuring new self-conscious fictions for our situation today – appears some way off. It is, without any doubt, a major collective task, but the fragmented Dutch (art) scene is not minded to start such a project today. However, I remain convinced that it will become a crucial theme for the future to which this project will have made a thoughtful contribution.

2. It is interesting to note in this regard the thunderous reception to exhibitions of key 1960s artists in the Netherlands in recent years as well as the popularity of Pim Fortuyn, Geert Wilders and Rita Verdonk in the political sphere, who speak almost as though a return to those years could still be made possible.

You can find out more about the two-year project at www.becomingdutch.com

Arjen Oosterman

Nieuwe vormen van betrokkenheid

Vijf bijdragen over architectuur en stadspolitiek

De redactie van *Open* vroeg aan vijf jonge ontwerp- en onderzoeksbureaus een bijdrage te maken waarin zij hun missie uiteenzetten ten aanzien van het huidige maakbaarheidsdenken in relatie tot de stedelijke ruimte. BAVO, Partizan Publik, ZUS, Flexmens en Dennis Kaspori/Jeanne van Heeswijk geven ieder op geheel eigen wijze invulling aan deze opdracht. Arjen Oosterman, architectuurhistoricus en hoofdredacteur van *Volume*, schreef hierbij een inleiding.

Wie de teksten in deze speciale bijdrage doorneemt stuit op niet minder dan een queeste. Niet alleen is de 'geest van '68' (en eerder) wederom vaardig over de auteurs, soms als inspiratie, soms als ijkpunt, ook wordt er actief gezocht naar een actuele vertaling van die bevlogen maatschappelijke betrokkenheid – die schijnbaar belangeloze strijd voor vrijheid pur sang – die vanuit het heden beschouwd moeilijk op juiste wijze getaxeerd kan worden naar de culturele en politieke kaders waarin de aanstormende generatie zich destijds bevond.[1]

Van simplisme is bij de vijf acterende partijen echter geen sprake. Ze lijken zich elk terdege bewust van het verschil tussen inspiratie en navolging. Laten we ons dus niet verliezen in bespiegelingen over Constants *homo ludens*, Debords spektakelmaatschappij of Le Corbusiers sanitaire burger, het gaat hier immers over de maakbare samenleving, niet over de kracht van de utopie. Laten we ons ook niet verliezen in een pathologie van de hedendaagse consumptiecultuur. Het debat over de rol van architectuur verengt momenteel al te snel tot het zich afzetten tegen een doorgeslagen commercialisme in combinatie met een overgewaardeerd individualisme. Grapte Dada niet al ooit 'Jedermann sein eigener Fussball'?

'Bespreekbaar maken', kent u die uitdrukking? Iets bespreekbaar maken. Typisch een uitdrukking voor een volk van open gordijnen, een volk dat overleeft en vooruitgaat door onderlinge verschillen en tegenstellingen uit te praten, in overleg op te lossen, naar 'werkbare verhoudingen' te streven, het conflict te mijden, inderdaad de consensus te zoeken. Onder meer door alles wat maar even onder de oppervlakte dreigt te blijven genadeloos en zonder gêne aan het daglicht bloot te stellen. De kaarten op tafel, net als de handen, het speelveld egaliseren, de potentiële ongelijkheid en hiërarchie neutraliseren, we hebben toch allemaal de beste bedoelingen?

Dat 'bespreekbaar maken' heeft een bijzondere beteke-

1 – Zoals het van een ergerlijk gebrek aan contextueel inzicht getuigt om de Bijlmer als megalomane maakbaarheidsmislukking af te doen en de huidige sloop/nieuwbouw als het finale bewijs daarvan, zo is het even kortzichtig om de anti-autoritaire oprispingen van destijds simpelweg als inspiratie te nemen voor een omgang met de door angst ingegeven rechtzinnigheid van dit moment.

nis gekregen in dit land sinds het begin van het derde millennium. Opeens bleken er allerlei zaken helemaal niet besproken en min of meer collectief onder de pet gehouden te zijn. En vanaf het moment dat dit publiekelijk duidelijk werd, opende zich een ware doos van Pandora. Plotseling bleken de als min of meer vaststaand ervaren regels van het spel niet meer geldig. De zaken werden niet alleen 'bespreekbaar' gemaakt, wat toch een vorm van dialoog veronderstelt en dus respect voor 'de ander', maar letterlijk alles wat iemand dwars zat kon en kan en moest ook opeens ongeclausuleerd wereldkundig gemaakt worden. Vrijheid verengd tot recht.

'Bespreekbaar maken' is niet alleen een sociaal-culturele kwestie, tijd en plaatsgebonden, maar ook uitdrukking van de organisatie, de interne logica van een samenleving. Het is niet eens geforceerd hier een 'ontwerp' in te willen zien. Niet in de zin van een of andere geheime overheidsdienst, die op subtiele wijze de bevolking naar zijn hand zet. Wel als uitdrukking van een onderliggende structuur. Wie die eenmaal op het spoor is, kan er mee spelen natuurlijk, dat weer wel. En overhoop halen blijkbaar.

Ook in de architectuur moest er veel bespreekbaar gemaakt worden, bleken er tal van taboes en anathema's aanwezig. En ook daar blijkt de bevrijding relatief. Het was geestig en *to the point* toen Sjoerd Soeters begin jaren tachtig pleitte voor onbeschaamd genieten door de Amerikaanse architect-ontwikkelaar John Portman ten voorbeeld te stellen met zijn 'If you like ice cream, why not have three scoops?' Het was nuttig dat de gebroeders Krier de betrekkelijkheid van de moderne aanpak aan de kaak stelden en de rijkdom van 'in het verleden behaalde resultaten' in het vak naar voren haalden. Of die ook meteen tot onwankelbare waarheid gebombardeerd moesten worden is een andere kwestie, zoals het nadrukkelijk door Soeters omarmde populisme hoogstens een optie kan zijn. Hier is van belang dat deze en andere onderzoekingen, experimenten en pamfletten een verbluffend effect en invloed hebben gehad. Juist in de tijd van de postmoderne relativering, van de fundamentele betrekkelijkheid van waarden, beweringen en standpunten, juist in die tijd blijkt de maatschappij een fors aantal graden te kunnen kantelen. Jo Coenens 'de geschiedenis als vriend' blijkt in de handen van het koningskoppel Rob Krier–Christoph Kohl een for-

mule op te leveren die in verbluffend tempo over ons land wordt uitgerold. Kortom: maakbaarheid in de zin van beïnvloeding tot op fysiek niveau is allerminst een gepasseerd station.

Toch is dat niet het maakbaarheidsbegrip dat meestal ter sprake komt in de kritiek. Dan gaat het vooral over *social engineering*, over overheidsingrijpen waarbij burgers of complete bevolkingsgroepen worden gemodelleerd naar een van overheidswege gestelde norm of praktijk. Edward C. Scott heeft er een nog altijd behartigenswaardige analyse van gegeven in zijn *Seeing Like a State*.[2] In een democratie kan dat idealiter niet voorkomen, maar de praktijk wijst anders uit. En daar komt een deel van de ambitie van BAVO, Flexmens, Partizan Publik, ZUS en Kaspori/Van Heeswijk vandaan.

Als alles politiek is, van waar we wonen en welk werk we doen tot welk soort aardappelen we consumeren, of eigenlijk het feit dat we aardappelen kopen en niet in onze achtertuin verbouwen, of daaraan voorbij, dat we een achtertuin hebben en dus een potentieel economisch intensiever gebruik van die grond blokkeren en sociaal gezien ons ruimtelijk afscheiden (onderscheiden?), wat goed is of juist slecht is, als alles politiek is, dan valt er veel te kiezen. Dat weten architecten als geen ander: ontwerpen is kiezen (en reduceren). Toch valt het blijkbaar tegen met de keuzevrijheid en mogelijkheden werkelijk te 'maken'. Zoals BAVO en Flexmens hier en elders demonstreren moet er voortdurend bevrijd, verhelderd, doorgeprikt en tegen het licht gehouden worden om ruimte te creëren voor … verbetering. BAVO gaat daarin het verst. Met nietsontziende radicaliteit binden ze ook veronderstelde bentgenoten de bel aan van Misvatting, Tekortkoming en Mislukking. Zoals in de hier gepubliceerde tekst. Het gevaar loert binnen de eigen gelederen. Dat ze in de scherpte van hun analyses soms wat doorslaan en in elke van overheidswege aangeplante boom een potentiële schuil-

2 – Scott toont in zijn alweer meer dan tien jaar oude studie over *social engineering* aan dat de poging grootschalige vraagstukken grootschalig aan te pakken tot mislukken is gedoemd. In het bijzonder de monocultuur moet het ontgelden in zijn onderzoek naar landbouw, bosbouw, en stedenbouwkundige experimenten. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven/Londen: Yale University Press, 1998).

plaats voor een politieagent ontwaren zij ze vergeven, de bijdrage aan denken en debat over de stedelijke conditie vanuit een politiek-filosofische invalshoek is er niet minder om.

Partizan Publik en ZUS staan wat anders in de praktijk. Ook zij zijn zich sterk bewust van de politieke dimensies van het ruimtelijk handelen. ZUS pleit expliciet voor een repolitisering van de stadsontwikkeling, al lijkt zich dat eerder op het niveau van sturing dan van ideologie af te spelen. Laat de overheid weer wat duidelijker aangeven wat de kaders en keuzen zijn, om zo tot intelligentere en zinvollere ontwikkeling van onze ruimtelijke orde te kunnen komen. Uiteindelijk ligt er een grote zorg over de conditie en ontwikkeling van ons openbaar domein ten grondslag aan de gevraagde en ongevraagde projecten die zij voorstellen.

Ook Partizan Publik is sterk doordrongen van het verband tussen politiek en ruimte. En net als ZUS kiezen ze ervoor via directe actie en interventie aan de kwaliteit van die openbare ruimte te werken. Door bewust te maken, door zichtbaar te maken, door bij te dragen aan transformatie en versterking. Omdat Partizan Publik geen ontwerpers binnen eigen gelederen heeft, leidt dat (tot dusverre) niet tot ontwerpen en gaat het primair over *spatial politics*. Maar wat ZUS en Partizan Publik gemeen hebben is dat via de actie gewerkt wordt aan die 'publieke zaak'. In binnen en buitenland, want zoals de projectenlijst van Partizan Publik laat zien wordt er even gemakkelijk in voormalig Oost-Europa, het Midden-Oosten of de VS gewerkt als in Nederland. Gemeenschappelijk in die projecten is een sterke interesse in 'postconflict' condities, omdat daarin potentieel zoveel mogelijkheden open liggen en tegelijkertijd zo ontzettend veel misgaat.

Het duo Kaspori/Van Heeswijk bezet misschien wel de meest klassieke positie in het maakbaarheidsdebat, door van onderop, of *bottom up* zoals dat nu moet heten, bewoners de mogelijkheid tot ruimtelijk handelen te bieden. Zoals Aldo van Eyck de architect beschreef als iemand die behulpzaam is bij het tot stand brengen van onderdak en ruimte, zo zijn Dennis Kaspori en Jeanne van Heeswijk behulpzaam bij het tot stand brengen van vooral buurtvoorzieningen. Er gaat een opvatting achter schuil over het activeren van bewonersgroepen door ze op hun creatieve vermogens aan te spreken en het vertrouwen dat dit op indivi-

dueel en groepsniveau tot een plezieriger samenleving leidt. Betrokkenheid maakt (mede)verantwoordelijk en creëert trots.

Wat alle vijf de partijen demonstreren is dat de handen weer jeuken om aan de slag te gaan vanuit engagement. Engagement, kent u dat begrip nog? Is dat niet verschrikkelijk *old school*, welhaast verdacht? Nee, het mag weer; of liever gezegd, er wordt door een groeiende groep die zich betrokkenen weet of betrokken voelt bij de ruimtelijke ontwikkeling weer ruimte voor opgeëist. Maken dat doe je.

Arjen Oosterman

New Forms of Involvement

Five Contributions on Architecture and Urban Politics

The editors of *Open* asked five young design and research firms to submit a contribution in which they would outline their mission in regard to the current philosophy of social engineering in relation to urban space. BAVO, Partizan Publik, ZUS, Flexmens and Dennis Kaspori/Jeanne van Heeswijk each interpreted this assignment in a way entirely their own. Arjen Oosterman, architecture historian and editor in chief of *Volume*, provides an introduction.

In reading the texts in this special section, one encounters nothing less than a quest. Not only does the 'spirit of '68' (and before) move the authors once more, sometimes as inspiration, sometimes as a standard, there is also an active effort to find a current translation of that impassioned social involvement – that seemingly disinterested struggle for freedom *pur sang* – that, from today's standpoint, is difficult to correctly appraise according to the cultural and political frameworks within which the up-and-coming generation operated at the time.[1]

None of the five acting parties, however, can be faulted for oversimplification. Each seems duly aware of the difference between inspiration and imitation. Let us not therefore get bogged down in reflections on Constant's *homo ludens*, Debord's spectacle society or Le Corbusier's sanitary citizen; what we are dealing with here is the socially engineered society, not the power of utopia. Let us not get mired either in the pathology of contemporary consumer culture. These days, the debate about the role of architecture all too quickly narrows to a rejection of uncontrolled commercialism in combination with overvalued individualism. Didn't Dada once joke, 'everyone his own football'?

'Bespreekbaar maken' – 'making something discussible' – do you know this expression? Making something discussible. A typical expression for the Dutch, a people of open curtains, a people that survive and progress by discussing differences and oppositions, by resolving things by mutual agreement, striving for 'workable relations', avoiding conflict, looking for consensus. In part by exposing to the light of day anything that even looks like it might stay under the surface, mercilessly and without embarrassment. Cards on the table, hands too, levelling the playing field, neutralizing potential inequality and hierarchy – we all have the best of intentions, don't we?

This 'making things discussible' has acquired a special significance in this country since the start of the third millennium. Suddenly there turned out to be all sorts of things that

1 – Just as dismissing the Bijlmer as a megalomaniacal failure of social engineering, and its current demolition and new construction as the final proof of this, demonstrates an exasperating lack of contextual insight, it is equally short-sighted to simply take the anti-authoritarian outbursts of the time as inspiration for how to deal with the fear-inspired orthodoxy of today.

were not discussed and were more or less collectively kept under our hats. And from the moment this became publicly evident, a veritable Pandora's Box opened up. Suddenly, the rules of the game, which had been more or less perceived as firmly established, no longer applied. Things were not just made 'discussible', which after all implies a form of dialogue and therefore respect for 'the other'; literally everything that bothered anyone could and can suddenly be broadcast to the world without proviso. Freedom has narrowed down to law.

'Making things discussible' is not simply a sociocultural question, linked to a place and time; it is also an expression of the organization, the internal logic of a society. It takes no effort to discern a 'design' in this. Not in the sense of some secret government agency that manipulates the population as it sees fit. But as an expression of an underlying structure. Once one figures that out, one can play with it, of course. And turn it upside down, apparently.

Many things had to be made discussible in architecture as well; there turned out to be numerous taboos and anathemas. And there too the liberation proves relative. It was witty and to the point when Sjoerd Soeters, in the early 1980s, advocated unashamed enjoyment by presenting the American architect and developer John Portman as an example, with his 'If you like ice cream, why not have three scoops?' It was useful that the Krier brothers exposed the relativity of the modern approach and brought attention to the rich variety of the 'previously achieved results' of the discipline. Whether this immediately needed to be celebrated as an irrefutable truth is another matter, just as the populism emphatically embraced by Soeters is at most an option. What matters here is that these and other investigations, experiments and pamphlets have had an astounding effect and influence. Precisely in the age of postmodern relativism, of the fundamental relativity of values, assertions and viewpoints, precisely in this era, society proves capable of tipping over by a significant number of degrees. Jo Coenen's 'history as friend', in the hands of the royal duo of Rob Krier and Christoph Kohl, produces a formula that is being rolled out across this country at an astonishing pace. In short: social engineering in the sense of influence down to the physical level is anything but a thing of the past.

Yet this is not the concept of social engineering that is usually addressed in the criticism, which mostly focuses on social engineering, on government interventions whereby citizens or entire sections of the population are modelled according to a government-imposed norm or practice. Edward C. Scott provided an analysis of this, one still worth considering, in his *Seeing Like a State*.[2] Ideally this cannot happen in a democracy, but reality proves otherwise. And this is where some of the ambitions of BAVO, Flexmens, Partizan Publik, ZUS and Kaspori/Van Heeswijk come from.

If everything is political, from where we live and what work we do to what kind of potatoes we consume, or actually the fact that we buy potatoes instead of growing them in our back garden, that we have a back garden and therefore are blocking a potentially more economically intensive use of this land and, socially speaking, separate (differentiate?) ourselves spatially, what is good or rather what is bad – if everything is political, there's a lot to choose. Architects know this better than anyone: to design is to choose (and reduce). Yet the freedom of choice and the opportunities to actually 'make' things are apparently disappointing. As BAVO and Flexmens demonstrate here and elsewhere, things constantly have to be liberated, clarified, punctured and held up to the light in order to create room for ... improvement. BAVO goes furthest in this. With implacable radicalism they accuse even their presumed philosophical allies of Misconception, Inadequacy and Failure. Like in the text published here. The danger lurks among their own ranks. We can forgive them that in the sharpness of their analyses they sometimes go a bit too far and see a potential hiding place for a policeman in every tree planted by the government – their contribution to reflection and debate on the urban condition from a political and philosophical angle is by no means diminished.

2 – In his study of social engineering, now more than ten years old, Scott demonstrates that the attempt to apply large-scale solutions to large-scale issues is doomed to fail. Monoculture is particularly criticized in his investigation of agriculture, forestry and urban-planning experiments. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1998).

Partizan Publik and ZUS demonstrate a somewhat different practice. They too are highly conscious of the political dimensions of spatial action. ZUS explicitly calls for a repoliticization of urban development, although this seems to operate more at the level of governance than of ideology. Let the government once again be more clear about what the frameworks and choices are, in order to arrive at a more intelligent and more meaningful development of our spatial order. Ultimately, the solicited and unsolicited projects they propose are grounded in genuine concern about the condition and development of our public domain.

Partizan Publik is also highly cognizant of the link between politics and space. And like ZUS they opt to work on the quality of this public space through direct action and intervention. By making people aware, by making things visible, by contributing to transformation and reinforcement. As Partizan Publik has no designers within its ranks, this has not lead (so far) to designs; it is primarily about spatial politics. Yet what ZUS and Partizan Publik have in common is that they work on this 'public issue' through action. At home and abroad, for as the Partizan Publik project list shows, they are as comfortable working in Eastern Europe, the Middle East or the USA as in the Netherlands. A common element to all these projects is a strong interest in 'post-conflict' studies, because these contain so many potential opportunities and yet result in so many failures.

The duo Kaspori/Van Heeswijk occupies perhaps the most classical position in the social engineering debate, by offering residents the opportunity to act spatially from the 'bottom up', as it's now called. Just as Aldo van Eyck described the architect as someone who helps create shelter and space, Dennis Kaspori and Jeanne van Heeswijk help create, for the most part, community facilities. Their work is based on a point of view about the activation of residents' groups by addressing their creative capabilities and the confidence that this, at an individual and group level, leads to a more pleasant society. Involvement generates (shared) responsibility and creates pride.

What all five parties demonstrate is a renewed thirst to get to work, inspired by a sense of engagement. Engagement,

remember that concept? Isn't it terribly old-school, almost suspect? No, it is accepted again, or rather, a growing group of people who feel involved in spatial development is claiming space for it again. Creation is something you do.

ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles)

Bazar Curieux

The City Museum as a Public Structure

ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles), via unsolicited proposals, investigates possibilities for new public domain in the contemporary city. Elma van Boxel and Kristian Koreman call for a philosophy of physical social engineering that, because of its public responsibility and long-term vision, would need to be demonstrated primarily by a government. At a time when private commissions and private initiatives are being embraced unquestioningly, the government should reflect on its core responsibility of public leadership. This cannot be expected of citizens and market players. Social engineering is an ideal that can make itself felt once more in an increasingly splintering society. Perhaps no longer as abstract, political propaganda, but in fact as a physical, urban reality.

The Evolution of Faith in Social Engineering

1970s: Distribution

Distribution of knowledge, power and income (Joop den Uyl). Through fundamental government interventions in society, using such available resources as cultural policy, housing and a social safety net, a society could be guided and improved. Back then, the consumer was still a citizen and the market player a marginal entrepreneur.

1980s and 1990s: Specialization

Freedom to Choose (Milton Friedman); in other words,

FUCK SOCIAL ENGINEERING AND LONG LIVE THE MARKET!

With the gradual collapse of the great political ideologies, a call emerged for more individual freedom. Freedom to fashion your life yourself, by choosing your own products, from Walkman to home. The market mechanism, by making its specific power processes run more efficiently, exercised a magic attraction on the political establishment. In no time, politics itself became a market, focused on target audience-oriented short-term thinking.

From 2000 to 2010: The Fall of the Target Group

There is talk of a radical democracy, in which everyone participates endlessly. The citizen has become a consumer and the public space a consumer-oriented seduction machine. In the grip of the market, it now seems impossible to reflect on long-term effects. A strong vision seems required to create connections within the gradually splintering public domain. In spite of the government's retrenchment, it seems to face a major responsibility. What is needed is limited social engineering that ensures that public structures are guaranteed in crucial places.

Liquidations in the Cultural Circuit

Segregation is hitting the public domain. Sites are increasingly being allocated to a specific target audience, resulting in countless 'successful' skate parks and extravagant, well-attended festivals. The point is no longer to get to know the other, for public space is now programmed to be risk-free and exclusive. There is even something like *Idols for Street Musicians*, because the authorities want to ensure that consumers will enjoy their urban product. The public domain has to be profitable, and stressed people just spend less. City centres are slowly turning into homogeneous shopping paradises, usually with the same chain shops, and are therefore intended for a limited target audience. One giant shopping area naturally leads to another. Anything smaller in size is not profitable and therefore not interesting – with a uniform scale distribution of the urban fabric as a result.

Another symptom of the effect of the market on the public domain is the erosion of the cultural programme. A cultural programme, by definition, seems too expensive and is therefore under tremendous pressure. Institutions have to meet their visitor targets, and either become 'low-brow' or are in danger of closing down. At the same time, the cultural programme is increasingly used as an economic stimulus. In Rotterdam this has resulted in the relocation of the Fotomuseum, the Lantaren/Venster cinema and the Academy of Architecture and Urban Design, with the aim of reviving new city districts. For convenience's sake, the intricate connections these places have in the city are forgotten, and they end up like aliens in a new context. This development too is detrimental to the public structure of the city.

It is precisely in the public domain of cultural meeting places, formed by schools, libraries, museums, sports facilities and debate centres that necessary interaction takes place. Along with the network of streets and squares they form the public structures of the city and of society, where diverse segments of the population are challenged to make use of them. In a society undergoing splintering, there is more

Poster commenting on the economic misuse of the cultural programme in Rotterdam.

As a response to the relocation of the cultural programme, such as the Academy of Architecture and Urban Design, an initiative for a programme in socially engineered urbanity, 'De Dependance' (The Annex), housed in a section of Rotterdam also threatened with demolition.

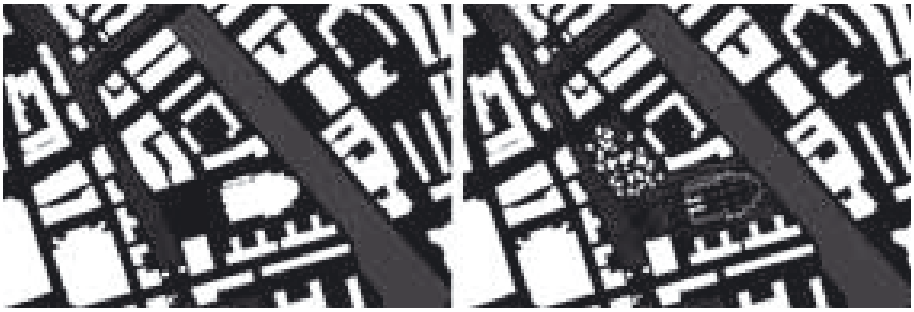
and more need for a neutralizing, accessible and connective public domain.

Instead of abstract, political propaganda for new social engineering, the government could in fact play a role in the physical activation of such a public structure and thereby provide a demonstration of a potential urban reality.

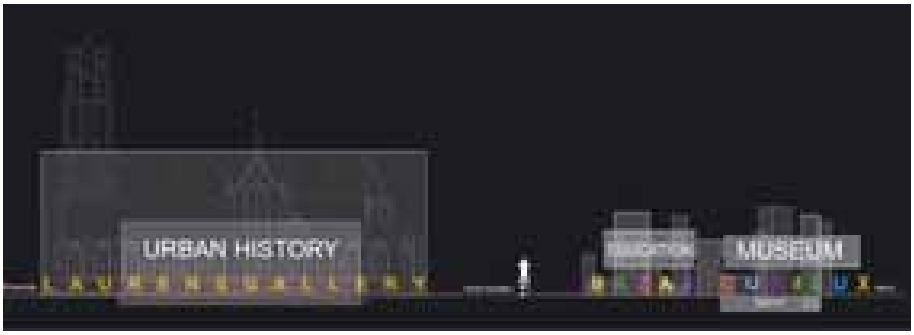
The City Museum as a Public Structure

The planned City Museum in Rotterdam, where the history of the city will be told, represents a major opportunity for the government to shoulder its public responsibility. The City Museum as a public structure in the urban fabric.

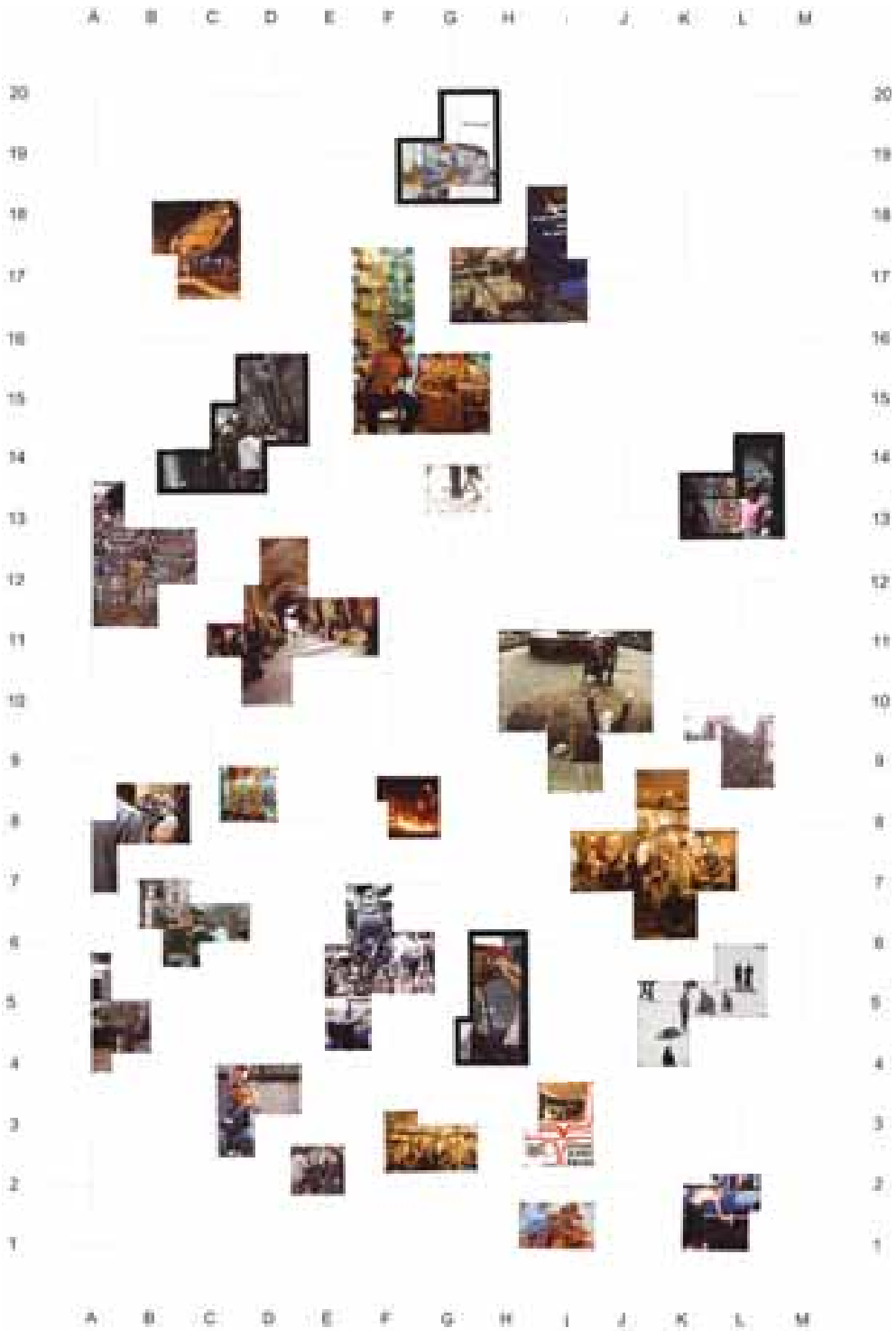
The city centre of Rotterdam features a great range of generic retail chains, in sharp contrast with the intricately laid out shopping streets on the outskirts, where the more informal economy of small-scale shops offering exotics wares is established. This is the culture of the immigrants, responsible for a significant proportion of the city's history. They have had a major impact on the course of that history and therefore deserve a significant place in the public network.



Nolli map of Laurenskwartier in Rotterdam, from closed block to bazaar.



Basic cross section.



Bazar Curieux map.

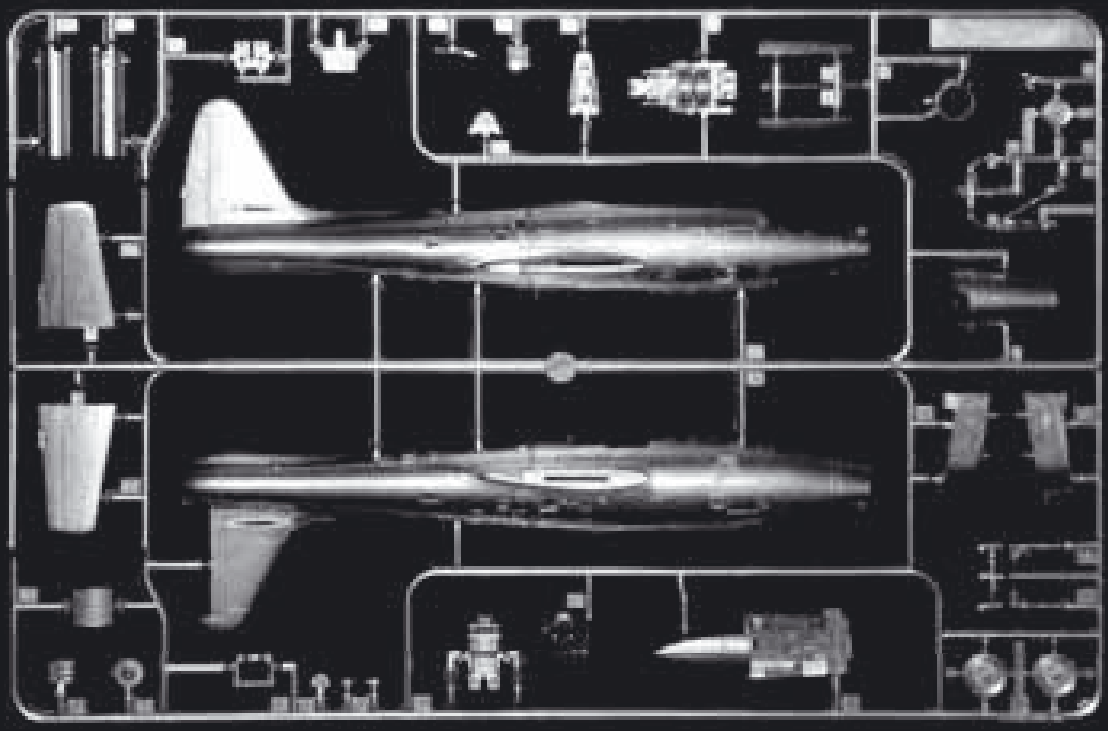
View from the Meent.

Bazar Curieux in its context.

We propose interpreting the City Museum as a new urban space, named ‘Bazar Curieux’. In order to enrich the standard urban framework, the area is to be set up as a bazaar. This will introduce a new scale and typology in the public space. The volumes of the museum are raised by a collective of 26 columns. The columns will become spaces that can be used as kiosks or studios. Some of them contain a neighbourhood in residence or a hotel room at the top. The low-threshold occupation of the spaces means that a continually changing quantity of activities can be developed, from traditional painting to exotic cuisine, from grocer to carpenter. The small-scale cultural and economic programme that will be housed here will generate a different kind of urbanity, focused on the manufacturability of cultural diversity. In the face of homogenization, this set-up opts for an informal, highly risky combination of very divergent ‘target audiences’, in the knowledge that cultural confrontation can lead to a more tolerant society.

By installing spaces like this in the urban network, target interventions can be made in the social structures of the city. Liberal polarizations can be neutralized or homogenizations enriched by alternative spaces. Social engineering is literally interpreted as the creation of physical structures that facilitate or impede certain behaviours. This will make the City Museum a demonstration of a potential society.

Partizan Publik



partizan publik

IDENTIFICATION

In 2005 a group of young enthusiasts who found common ground in their urge to move & to move on founded Partizan Publik. Intrigued by the possibilities and impossibilities for people to manipulate their surroundings, Partizan Publik is always looking for new ways of confrontation, inspiration and development in the public sphere.

Partizan Publik is a think and action tank devoted to a braver society. The Partizans explore, produce and implement social, political and cultural instruments, which generate positive and sustainable change to people and their surroundings. As such we take part in the complex and continuous process of global social engineering.

EXPLANATION

'Social engineering' is a controversial and highly politically incorrect term. We know. The practice of engineering societies is associated with colonial and apartheid repression and oppressive rule. We despise. In our brave new world in which colonisators, colonials and postcolonials battle for identity and space social engineering might be more complex, but nevertheless just as present. We REclaim. Partizan Publik and others examine to what extent societies are shaped, stylised, organised and eventually created by power over people.

VOLUME #16: ENGINEERING SOCIETY
What: Publication
Where: Global
When: January 2008 – June 2008
Aim: To provoke thinking and discussion on social engineering, and architecture as an instrument to that end.
Outcome: Collaborative publication, due June 2008. Project Volume is a cooperation between Archis Foundation, OMA, C-Lab.

ARMENIA DREAMING
What: Collaborative research and exhibition.
Where: Yerevan, Armenia
When: May - June 2008
Aim: Yerevan is a dream city, a city constructed out of myth, utopia, desire, dreams and longing. Through building a Dream Depot of post Soviet urban imaginaries in Yerevan we intended to engineer an understanding of the intentional and unintentional forces that are shaping this post-Soviet city.
Outcome: Group exhibition, Dream Depot.
In cooperation with: Dutch Art Institute, Vardan Azatyan, Vahram Aghasyan, Utopiana.am, Open Society Institute.

DETROIT UNREAL ESTATE AGENCY
What: Research, action and exhibition.
Where: Detroit, Michigan
When: March 2008 onward
Aim: Detroit is a post-capitalist city: the world-famous case of the shrinking city. After Ford and GM ripped the economic heart out of the city, what is the value and use of the 90.000 something empty plots in Detroit?
Outcome: project on-going
In cooperation with: Andrew Herscher, Mireille Rodier, Malkit Shoshan, Femke Lutgerink

SOCIAL ENGINEERING IN THE AMSTERDAM METROPOLE
What: Research and action course
Where: Amsterdam
When: February - June 2008
Aim: Social change at the Damrak, Timorplein, in Nieuwendam-Noord and Westerpark. To develop a new praxis of social engineering, to conjure up a result-oriented university course.
Outcome: project on-going.
In cooperation with: Amongst others, Martijn van Tol, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam Municipality, Ymere housing cooperation, Stichting Doen.

KABUL: SECURE CITY, PUBLIC CITY

What: Research and publication
Where: Kabul, Afghanistan
When: October 2007
Why: Returning refugees made Kabul one of the fastest growing cities in the world. A radical choice in this make-shift metropolis is wheather to strive for inclusive or exclusive security.
Aim: To critique the appropriation of public space and to contribute to a more just spatial politics.
Outcome: Local network, publication, plans for a two week artist/architect/activist clinic on urban development.
In cooperation with: Amongst others, Niloufar Tajeri, Ajmal Maiwandi, Jolyan Leslie, Jeanno Gaussi, Ole Bouman, George Agnew and Lilet Breddels.

MUTANNABI CAR BOMB WRECKS

What: Workshops, lectures, exhibition of wrecks and public action
Where: Amsterdam, The Hague, Enschede, Rotterdam
When: June 2007 – December 2007
Why: On March 5 2007, a car bomb exploded on the famous Mutanabbi Book Market in Baghdad. What is the extend and value of our personal, political and moral empathy with such an act?
Aim: A public research into the boundaries of personal empathy and collective responsibility.
In cooperation with: Amongst others. Robert Kluijver, Saleh Hassan Faris, Abdelkader Benali, Chris Keulemans, Aysel Sabahoglu, Evert-Jan Grit, Jonas Staal & Jack Segbars.

ZOOM IN ZOOM OUT

What: Publication
Where: Netherlands
When: May 2007
Aim: In the European view on the Middle East, the oriental gaze seems to have smoothly morphed in a different, equally determinist gaze: that of the region as a conflict zone.
We compiled a 32 page magazine that proposes an alternative cultural politics concerning this region.
Outcome: Single issue magazine distributed with Vrij Nederland magazine
With contributions by amongst others Robert Fisk, Stephano Boeri, Rami Khouri, Amirali Ghasemi, Geert van Kesteren.

SIM POLITICS: A WAY OUT OF THE WAR

What: Simulation of Afghanistan peace negotiation
Where: Amsterdam, Utrecht, Ottawa
When: June 2007 - September 2007
Why: Six years into the war, a military solution seems a far cry. What are the possibilities to negotiate a way out of the war? A simulation exercise for policymakers, politicians, activists and academics to provoke a pro-active policy path for change.
Outcome: Public sessions in the Netherlands, closed session and media scandal in Canada.
In cooperation with: Clingendael Institute, Fatma Wakil, Ahmed Rashid and the Senlis Council.

STUDIO BEIRUT

What: Design workshops and public actions
Where: Beirut
When: July 2007
Aim: After the July 2006 war, Beirut is undertaking yet another fierce project of rebuilding. What is the role and function of public space in this fragmented city? Interventions on four public spaces: the former Central Station, the Cola district (refugee camp), the Corniche (littoral boulevard) and the Garage Charles Helou (international transport hub).
Outcome: Research, interventions, exhibition and publication of design solutions.
In cooperation with: Beirut Municipality, American University Beirut, Academie Lebanais des Beaux Arts, Archis and Pearl Foundations, and many many more.

THE LOST ROOM

What: Research, action and exhibition
Where: Beirut
When: summer 2007
Aim: The Lebanese National Museum gives an account of the history of the country starting in a glorious Bronze Age, ending halfway the nineteenth century. A modern national history is contested terrain. We set out to give an account of a possible contemporary national history.
Outcome: A real-life annotated history of Beirut along collective memories of favorite places and sweet memories.
In cooperation with: Studio Beirut workshop participants, Edwin Gardner and Dirk-Jan Visser.

POST SOVIET URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN TBILISI

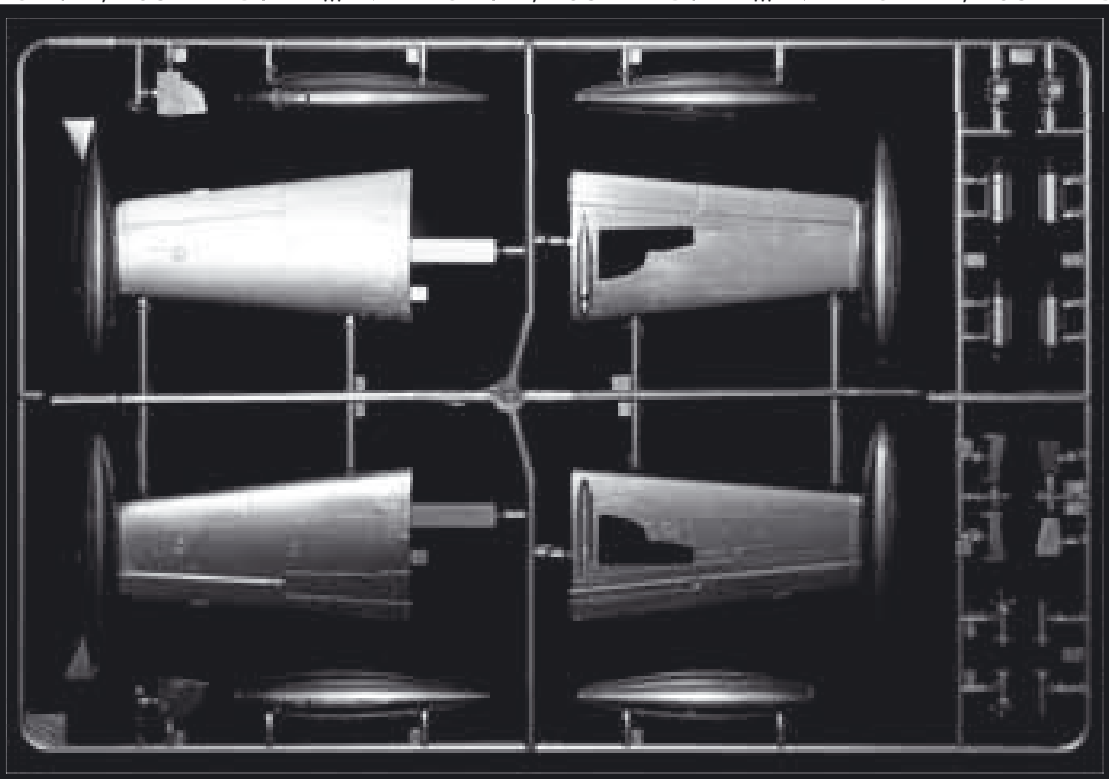
What: Design workshops and public actions
Where: Tbilisi
When: March 2007
Aim: Georgia's post soviet transformation is a messy process. The virulent economic development misses out on a number of groups in society, leading to displacement and urban disintegration. The workshop intervened on three sites: Hotel Abkhazia (a refugee building), the Varketili district (typical Soviet blocks) and the Kirov Factory (an industrial area).
Outcome: research, design, interventions, exhibition and publication.
In cooperation with: F.A.S.T., Nana Qutateladze, Levan Asabashvili and Vakhtang Kasrelishvil.

AS TURKEY TURNS

What: Research, debate and publication
Where: Amsterdam
When: December 2006
Aim: To provoke the discussion on the influence of Turkish media on sense of identity amongst Turks in the Netherlands.
Outcome: A tactical map of Turkish parties, media outlets and others in defense of 'Turkishness'.
In cooperation with: Selli Altunterim, Nuri Karabulut, Mehmet Ülger and Press Now.

PUBLIC SPACE INVADERS

What: Action
Where: Beirut
When: November 2006
Aim: Beirut is a fragmented city, its areas are exclusive on the basis of religious-ethnic identity and class. To contest the exclusive appropriation of key public spaces, we annotated public space at the Corniche, Martyr and Sassine Squares, and in Hamra, Solidere, Monot and Gemayzeh.
Outcome: Critical acclaim, media coverage, repetition.
In cooperation with: Christiaan Fruneaux, Pascale Hares, Rani al Rajji, Joe Mounzer, Aukje Dekker, Steve Eid, Cara and Gressy and Layla



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Special thanks in all projects goes to Christiaan Fruneaux and Studio BOEM

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Jeanne van Heeswijk and Dennis Kaspori

Marketplaces for Cultural Collaboration

Jeanne van Heeswijk
and Dennis Kaspori

Marketplaces for Cultural Collaboration

Jeanne van Heeswijk and Dennis Kaspori
Jeanne van Heeswijk and Dennis Kaspori work together on projects in which they endeavour to stimulate cultural production and to develop or reorganize public domains.
An essential element of their practice is the establishment and management of an infrastructure for cultural exchange, platforms for dialogue and care networks that can create conditions for more inclusive forms of urban design.

The development of a city is a collective process. In that regard, the city can always be transformed, and there is great faith in the potential for developing models and instruments that enable these communities to participate in building the city. Yet this faith ignores the innocence

or the naivety of this idea of transformability being based on a harmonious togetherness.

Enabling the individual or the community to participate in building the city means more than presenting them with a few choices. For this would mean that we can still only participate within the already established conditions, such as public comment channels or classical forms of protest including demonstrations and standard procedures. On the contrary, it is precisely these conditions, the notions of how we wish to and are able to live together, that we should be able to question again and again within this process. Offering a range of choices, in that regard, is one last convulsion of the supply-side transformability idea that still views the citizen as a consumer.

The question is whether we are capable of creating a place, which we call the public domain, in which, in discussion with one another, we can face up to the confrontation and in which we can address one another as co-producers of the city. Can we make this arena of tension visible and develop instruments that make it possible to intervene in that area? Can we collectively develop a narrative about the city in which everyone has a place? And can we then develop the instruments that enable people to genuinely fill in this place and deepen, sharpen or question the narrative?

Project Descriptions

In the former Labour Council building in Rotterdam, 15 small housing-work units have been built, specially intended for young people endeavouring, from their vocational training, to arrive at a form of specialized entrepreneurship focused on craftsmanship. Freewheelers is a one-year programme intended to develop this venue into a breeding ground for cultural entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurs selected work together on new products and services related to the bicycle. Freewheelers was developed under the aegis of Vestia.

Case Study: Rotterdam Skills City vs. the Creative City

Rotterdam faces a huge challenge in urban restructuring. In the coming decade, about 20,000 dwellings will have to be replaced. With this operation, the city is attempting to play catch-up and establish a global position as an attractive location. Rotterdam is attempting to make the transition from a workers' city to a creative city.

To this end, Rotterdam is working on an attractive image, on external adhesion, in order to attract industry from all corners of the world. This external focus, however, will remain inadequate as long as it is not matched by a reinforcement of the internal cohesion of the city. Co-positioning is therefore required: the external, image-based positioning must be supported by internal positioning, based on social cohesion and cultural infrastructure.

In the last year, Rotterdam's ambitions to develop into a creative city have taken increasingly concrete forms, with the presentation of the new Vision for the City 2030. This Vision for the City outlines a perspective in which the emphasis lies on physical aspects and economics.

But is urban development well served by this physical approach, or does building also entail the construction of relationships and the production of urban consciousness? The question of whether the high-culture economic impetus of the creative industry is sufficient or whether it still requires an integral translation was answered by Richard Florida: 'Creativity in the world of work is not limited to members of the Creative Class . . . I strongly believe that the key to improving the lot of underpaid, underemployed and disadvantaged people lies not in social welfare programs or low-end make-work jobs . . . but rather in tapping the creativity of these people.'

Marga Weimans, inspired by the Afrikaandermarkt and in cooperation with local handicrafts artisans and sewing studios, is developing a new fashion label for Freehouse. The line will be shown in Paris next year. This project is being carried out in cooperation with Kosmopolis Rotterdam.

Cindy van den Bremen is developing the project Suit It Yourself Sari with market traders. Based on fabrics on offer in the market and using simple alterations, they are developing new products that can be made on site and to measure. This project is being carried out in cooperation with Pact op Zuid, Vestia and Kosmopolis Rotterdam.

Tapping talents and developing skills should be organized in a much more energetic way. The integral connection of internship trajectories to the urban network could be the key to this. To learn is to participate. And are the qualities of city residents not more optimally developed when they are taken seriously in their creative contributions and addressed as co-producers of an urban society?

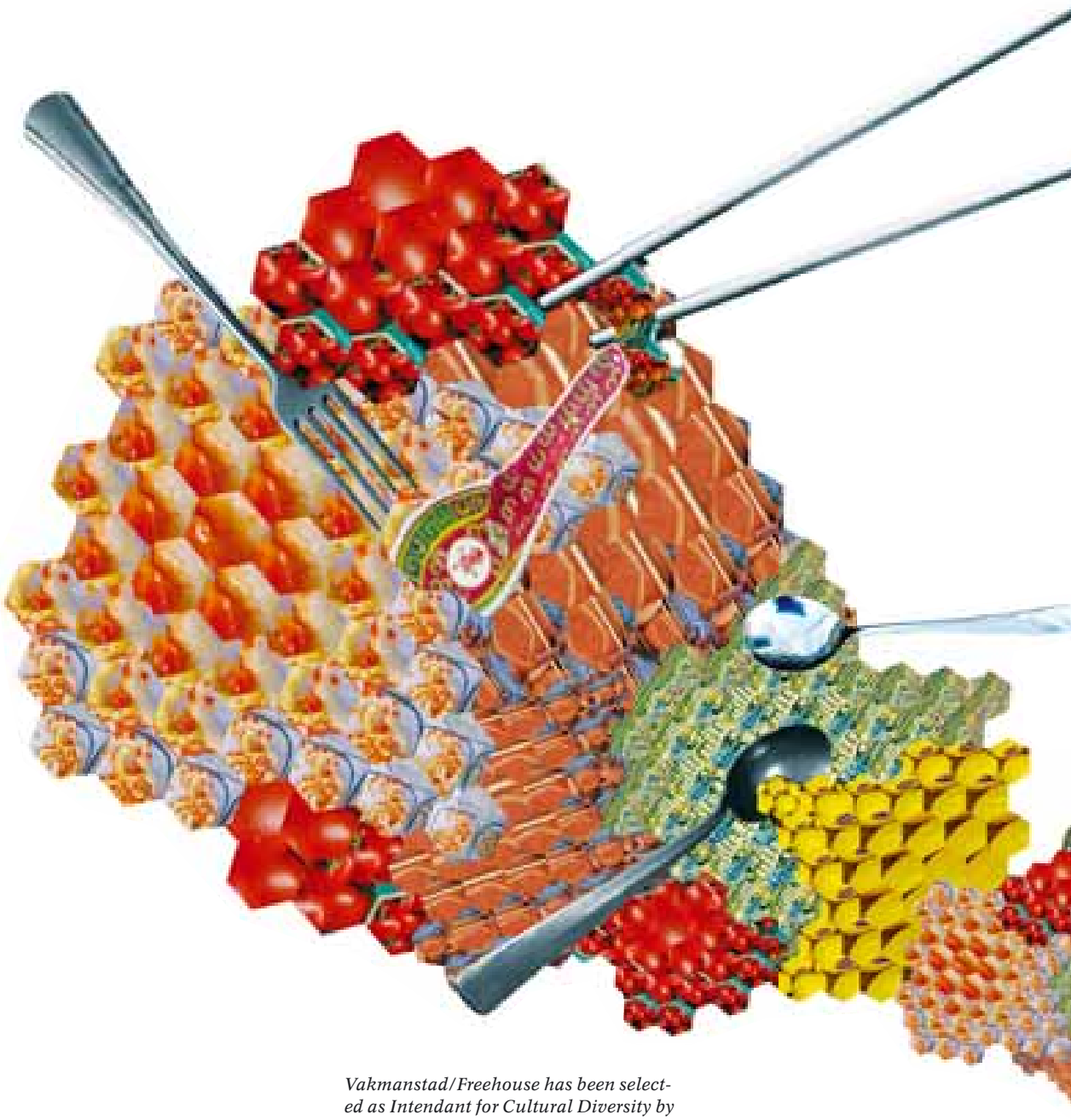
Co-producers are stakeholders and interested parties who connect, formally or informally, with others and in the process create public space and communication. In this relational context they share their involvement in the city: communication and participation interlink here. Rotterdam Vakmanstad (Skills City) initiates and stimulates these interactions as co-productions of public domain.

The idea of co-producers is inextricably linked to the idea of the public domain. Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, in their book *In Search of New Public Domain* (2001), define the public domain as those places where an exchange between different social groups can take place and actually does take place: 'The shift towards a cultural-geographic approach involves a departure from the notion of absolutism in ascertaining the value or meaning of spaces. The essence of a cultural geography is precisely that analysis of the ambiguity, or, in more political terms, the struggle between various meanings. Designing public domain can then become a question of the stimulation of informal manifestations of diversity and the avoidance of interventions that are intended to make such manifestations impossible.'

The public domain, they say, is primarily a (cultural) experience. We must no longer consider the public domain the result of purely economic and legal considerations, but rather begin to see it and use it as the (per-) formative basis of a city under development.

Debra Solomon, in cooperation with local food suppliers, is developing a collective restaurant that creates new cultural, culinary and economic links among the businesses involved. The dishes are sold from a cart that, as a cultural embassy for Rotterdam's Afrikaander district, can pop up in other parts of the city. This project is being carried out in cooperation with Kosmopolis Rotterdam and Imagine IC.

Inclusive urban design does not mean importing capacities from the outside. It should, first and foremost, mobilize the physical and sociocultural capital that is available in the existing residential area. The public domain provides a platform for exchange, for participation and communication. In the process it underpins a broadly supported and integral idea about living together in the community.



Vakmanstad/Freehouse has been selected as Intendant for Cultural Diversity by the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture project fund.

Practice: Freehouse, a Model for Cultural Entrepreneurship

In concrete terms Freehouse is striving to set up spaces in which local entrepreneurs, young people and artists can come together to exchange knowledge, experiences and ideas. This exchange will lead to a form of cultural production that can reinforce the economic position of those involved and makes visible the cultural process of conceptualization and realization, thereby stimulating cultural self-awareness.

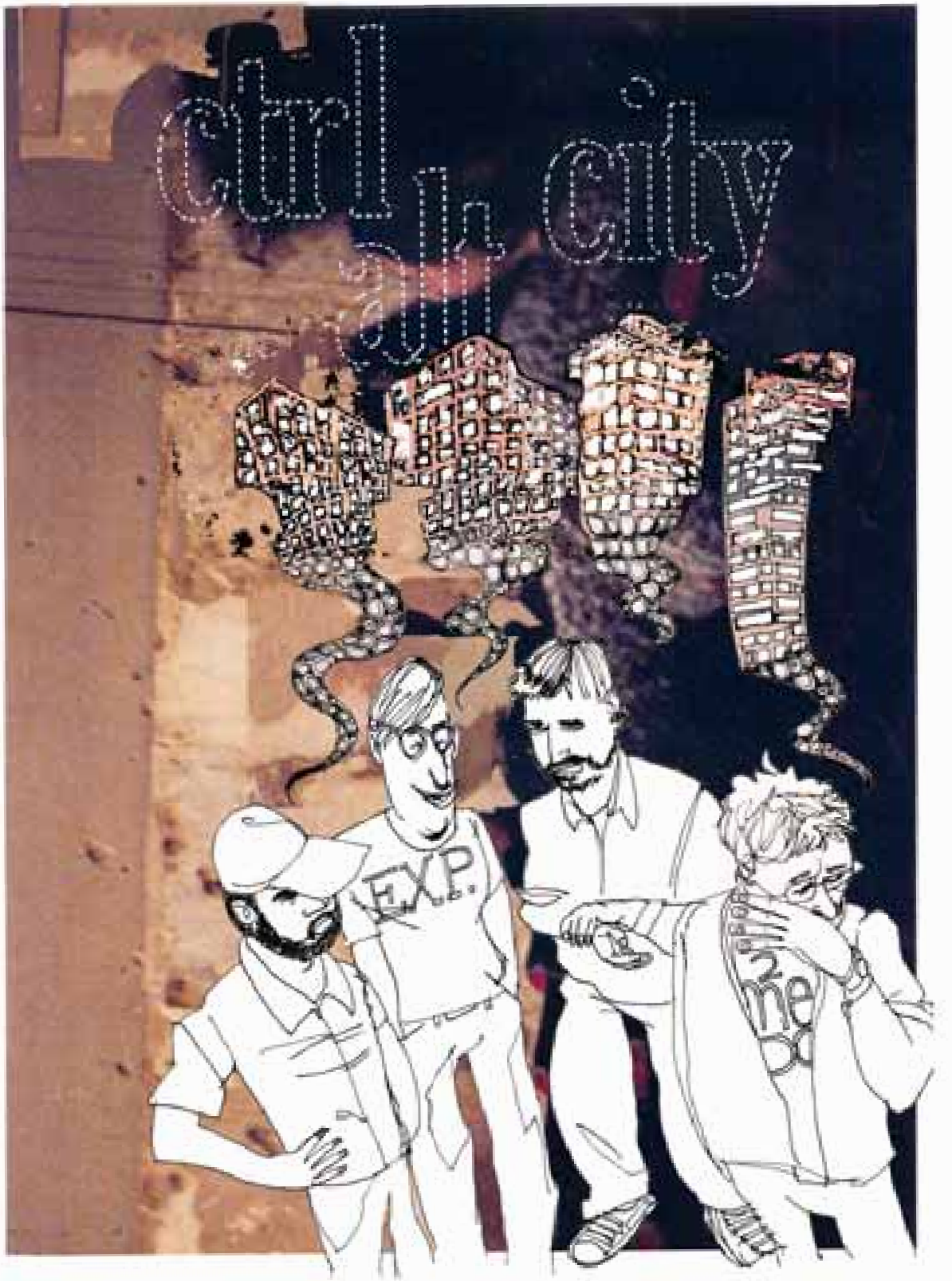
An existing model is used as a starting point, and research will be done to determine how this model can be translated to the current and local situation of Rotterdam. The existing model is the 'Free House' or *Freihaus*. This medieval and baroque model created 'free' places for 'outsiders', where they could settle under favourable conditions in acknowledgement of their positive contribution to public space and culture in general. The Freehouse accommodates a group of 'outsiders' who do not possess the usual social, cultural and economic infrastructure to participate in political and social life but are active within more alternative forms of the economy.

By setting up workshops, carrying out interventions and creating living models, Freehouse is attempting, in addition to stimulating the above-mentioned collaboration, to provide impetus to thinking about a more inclusive and intrinsic development of the city of Rotterdam.

Flexmens

Text:
Merijn
Oudenampsen,
illustrations:
Thijs Vissia

Open Source Urbanism: A First Step


Child in City
E.X.P.

Forty years after the revolt of May '68, the prevailing opinion seems to be one of aggrieved jealousy, disguised as the wisdom of experience. A series of retrospective newspaper articles seeks to finish once and for all with a troubled legacy. Writers stubbornly struggle to distance themselves from the idea that idealism and engagement could mean anything other than the charitable causes espoused by pop stars and society figures. The *soixante-huitards* are dismissed as sandbox idealists, weak-minded and aimless sympathizers of terrorism, who in their unbridled naivety thought the world could be changed; we know better by now. It's the gist of several months of disappointing newspaper reading.

What all this disparagement of the '68 activists is meant to cloak – without succeeding particularly well – is the bottomless vacuity of today's politics and the loss of any horizon along which social development might take place. Where are the utopian visions today? Where are the visions of the future, for that matter? With the exception of the development scenarios of consultancy firms, planning bureaus and policy advisers, no one is willing to offer any sort of vision about a collectively desirable future. The world cannot be remade, we are told, when it is in fact being irreversibly reproduced day after day.

Urban space is where the spirit of '68 – in essence a struggle against any form of authority – particularly manifested itself, not just in Paris, but also in the inner cities of the USA, where the violent repression of the civil-rights movement degenerated into full-scale riots, in the streets of Prague, where the rebellion turned against the Soviet occupation, or in bullet-riddled Saigon, target of the Vietnamese Tet Offensive. In Amsterdam the spirit of '68 was embodied by the Provo and Kabouter movements, the Nieuwmarkt protests, and the general resistance of residents against the form of autocratic modernist urban development in force at the time. A small revolution took place, one that still defines the structure of Dutch cities to this day.

It is therefore in the area of urban development – in Dutch history one of the most fertile grounds for the development of radical politics – that an impressive system of procedures was created to prevent conflict and not so much parry criticism as render it toothless. 'Interactive policy making', 'open plan processes' with 'sounding-board groups', 'consultation procedures', 'co-production': the quantity of terms used to describe the participation of residents in contemporary urban development gives the impression that we are living in a veritable Mecca of democracy. Ultimately, however, the marvellous participation models result in a disappointing reality of notification and information, with a few therapeutic public-comment meetings to calm tempers a little. For it's too late for

any real decisions. The political establishment now hides behind a hedge of semantic impenetrability: urban development plans are deliberately drawn up in a jargon that no resident can comprehend. We live in a so-called post-political age, where the framework of politics is set and remains unquestioned by any political party, and within which tiny alterations are the subject of intense negotiations.

The post-political framework of contemporary urban policy is that of the entrepreneurial city. An entrepreneurial mindset has taken over city government, where the drive towards competition among cities has supplanted every other policy consideration. As much care as is being devoted to the strategic positioning of cities in global flows of human and financial capital, so little interest does there seem to be in adopting the existing population of the city as the premise for any integral vision of city politics. We have arrived at a clearly atopian juncture,[1] safely removed from any utopian philosophy and at the same time from the dystopian darkness.

The only fertile domain of utopian politics today seems to exist in the digital world, in the open-source software movement FLOSS,[2] where an all too real battle is being fought for the public, open nature of the Internet. Although there have been attempts to pull these politics out of the computer domain and transpose them to analogue everyday life, this has aroused surprisingly little interest in the social mainstream. The first step in the Netherlands to translate the cybernetic to the urban domain, strangely enough, is coming from the real-estate sector, which describes its projects using terms like *urban hardware* (urban infrastructure) and *urban software* (urban programming). It is no longer just about the bricks. Project developers have discovered that genuine added value lies in linking the physical hardware (the built environment) to sociocultural software (practices, identities, and so forth). This is why project developers now almost routinely invite artists and other cultural actors, on a permanent or temporary basis, to 'add some flavour' to as yet unfinished real estate, in order to jack up the prices. Almost every large-scale project in Amsterdam is now associated with a new cultural institution; the Zuidas has a design museum, the South Banks of the IJ have the Muziekgebouw, and the Overhoeks project the new Filmmuseum. Even in the restructuring of social housing, cultural branding has been turned into a new trend.

Interestingly, these computer terms of software and hardware were translated to urban space in the 1970s by the Pop Art architecture group Archigram,[3] to promote the use of soft and flexible materials such as the inflatable bubble instead of the modernist hardware of steel and cement. Along with contemporaries such as the Italian architecture group Archizoom and texts such as Jonathan Raban's *Soft City*, Archigram

1 — I use atopia here in the sense of the non-place, the dominance of the generic. See the essay 'On Atopia' by Italian architect Vittorio Gregotti, in: Vittorio Gregotti, *Inside Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

2 — See the article by McKenzie Wark, 'Copyright, Copyleft, Copygift', *Open, no. 12 (NAi Publishers in collaboration with SKOR, 2007).*

aimed its critique at the monotonous and rational functionalism of modernism, presenting a more organic conception of the city as a living organism (comparable views made Aldo van Eyck the quintessential architectural spokesman of the Nieuwmarkt battle against urban modernization). The term urban software thus dates back to the 1960s and 1970s, with software as the social programming of a city and hardware as its infrastructure. Just as the Situationists experimented with bottom-up software through psychogeography and the *dérive*, so did subjective, organic and bottom-up approaches develop into a spearhead of the utopian urbanism of the time. French urbanist Henri Lefebvre, an important source of inspiration for the urban social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, formulated 'the right to the city' in the 1960s: '. . . the right to the city means the right of citizens and city residents . . . to take part in all the networks and circuits of communication, information and exchange.'[4]

In light of current notions of cities as centres for trade in and exploitation of knowledge (the 'creative knowledge economy'), this formulation of the right to the city seems more imperative than ever, as well as being intrinsically connected to open-source politics. For, in the neoliberal city, this libertarian approach to software is being replaced by an increasingly tightly regulated and coded version, in which urban programming often comes to serve narrow economic functionalism. Through the introduction of codes of behaviour, local ordinances and an increased police presence, streets are kept free of unsanctioned street scenes and undesirable use. By means of the creative city policy, the neoliberal city encourages and promotes the influx of highly educated residents, even as cutbacks are imposed on the creative public domain such as education and the cultural sector and lower education levels have been in crisis for years. Notions of cultural and creative entrepreneurship are becoming dominant in the cultural sector, formerly grounded in political and aesthetic considerations. Culture as a consumer product is developing into a crucial resource in the branding battle among cities. In the process, cultural branding becomes an attempt to construct competitive urban software products that serve to 'programme' the urban space in the most economically favourable fashion possible. The neoliberal city is becoming the Microsoft of the spatial knowledge economy: it chooses branding over substance and refuses to makes its source code – its political agenda – public. With the 'kernel'[5] of the city increasingly focused on intercity competition, policy no longer needs legitimization – the need to be a 'top city' is reason enough. It seems an almost inevitable necessity, as a response to this trend, to create a programme that translates the demands of the FLOSS movement to the urban space. The realization of a public domain dedicated to the

3 — F.M. Ribeiro and R. Spitz, 'Archigram's Analogical Approach to Digitality', *International Journal of Architectural Computing, vol. 4, no. 3, September 2006, 20-32.*

4 — Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 194-195.

bottom-up production of knowledge and power, and an open urban source code that encourages, rather than complicates, participation; these, at any event, are two essential ingredients of a yet to be determined method for open-source urbanism.

5 — In computer science, the 'kernel' is the central component of most computer operating systems. The most important function of the kernel is to manage the system's resources, which comes down to the communication between the software and the hardware of the computer. In its urban metaphor, this makes the kernel the central locus of power in the city: the governance structure that has developed around the city government. For more on kernels, see W. Wulf, 'HYDRA: the Kernel of a Multiprocessor Operating System', *Communications of the ACM,* vol. 17, no. 6, 1974.

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BAVO

The New Myth of Relative Social Engineering


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In the struggle against the global world order, Lieven De Cauter calls for a rehabilitation of social engineering and the realization that political choices do matter.[1] And rightly so. The triumphal march of the global world order – at least at an ideological level – is being made possible by an apolitical view of society. We see it as an 'occurrence', a spontaneous play of conflicting forces that constantly short-circuit one another and seek out synergies. The role of politics has been reduced to merely 'policing' the orderly course of this play of forces, without the ambition to want to guide it, as was the case during the heyday of the socially engineered society.[2] Nonetheless 'social engineering' still treads the societal stage. Monitoring, after all, also concerns the safeguarding of the essential conditions for the societal occurrence, such as parliamentary democracy, press freedom and the free circulation of goods and capital, conditions that the 'police troops' of the global world order defend with force if necessary.

Remarkably, however, De Cauter also immediately puts the brakes on his call for a 'repoliticization' by immediately speaking about a 'relative' social engineering. At first glance this defensive approach is understandable. To again advocate total social engineering would not only be unacceptable, but above all not credible, given the current consensus on the causal link between social engineering and totalitarianism. The social engineering of society has become an anathema over which hangs a corny paternalist haze. De Cauter's emphasis on the relative, however, is more than merely strategic. With it he expresses the more general conceptual movement to make thinking and acting in terms of a utopia – the framework within which attempts at social engineering were invariably undertaken – acceptable once more by no longer viewing it as a 'guiding-image', but as a 'counter-image'. The term utopia no longer refers to the representation of an alternative model of society as the guiding thread for a political project. On the contrary, it is understood in terms of an 'unceasing indictment' against the inequities intrinsic to the existing world order.[3]

De Cauter himself seems not to believe in the possibility of repoliticizing the global world order. Within his train of thought, critical counterforces can at most make an ethical appeal to the global order to better control its excesses – what on closer examination is also the bas ic

1. See 'Utopia and Globalization' in: Lieven De Cauter, *The Capsular Society*, Reflect #3 (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2004), 184-191.

2. We use 'policing' as the translation of the concept of 'la police' that Jacques Rancière defined in detail as a depoliticized form of conducting politics. See Jacques Rancière, *La mésentente* (Paris: Ed. Galilée, 1995).

3. Lieven De Cauter also situates the practice of relative social engineering as resistance in light of the formulation of an 'absolute demand for justice'.

position of the 'global governance' movement.[4] This assumes that the global world order is not infallible, but is capable of regulating its own shortcomings, without external political interference. The assumption is that globalization, in its current, neoliberal form, is an inevitable, quasi-natural process, which at most requires the stipulation of certain ethical (behavioural) codes. A defining feature of these ethical codes is that they are drawn up by the parties involved themselves. Think of the Dutch publicly traded corporations that recently formalized their own behaviour with the famous Tabaksblat Code. Alternative globalization ethicists, like De Cauter, can at most exert pressure to accelerate this natural process of self-regulation.

It is precisely this ultimate naturalization of the global order that needs to be combated. A merely *ethical* counterposition is not sufficient for this purpose.[5] What is needed is a *political* critique of the global world order: the global world order must be stripped of any pretence of naturalness by critically reconstructing its 'socially engineered' character, as well as exposing the last fragments of utopian thinking that lend this order its coherence.[6]

The Social Engineering of Spontaneous Initiatives

A good start for such a project is to expose the superficial character of the 'demonization of social engineering' in today's society. For all that it is taboo these days to speak in terms of social engineering, the philosophy of social engineering is nonetheless being applied on a massive scale. Geographer Erik Swyngedouw rightly points out that, despite what official ideology would suggest, neoliberalism maintains an intimate relationship with state intervention.[7] Not coincidentally, he made this observation in connection with the development of the Zuidas in Amsterdam, a large office, residential and leisure complex currently being

4. This solution to the excesses of globalization in terms of 'better management' is advocated by such figures as Joseph Stiglitz, one of the most famous critics of neoliberal globalization. See Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalisation and its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2003).

5. Because of the ethical slant of De Cauter's position, he can easily be forced into the position of the hysteric or whistleblower who continually challenges the global world order to respond to one failing or another – war yesterday, global warming today, something else tomorrow – without proposing an alternative himself. Even his call to politicize the global world order by creating alternative worlds in its margins is significantly undermined by the way in which De Cauter interprets this resistance (among other things, with general terms such as alternative globalism, the anti-war movement and environmental activism) as well as the idealistic selection of the margin as a field of action.

6. This premise is based on Slavoj Zizek, who argues that a critique lies, first and foremost, in the study of the reproduction of the existing order. See the introduction to *The Indivisible Remainder* (London/New York: Verso Books, 1996).

built in the south of the city. At an official level, the Zuidas is represented as the spontaneous outcome of societal processes: the demand for more office space, trendy residential accommodation and cultural infrastructure, as well as the need for reliable access. The reality, however, is that the Zuidas is part of what the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) calls the 'National Spatial Framework' of the Netherlands: the collection of all the spatial assets that are crucial to the international competitive position of the Netherlands – and which are therefore meticulously managed at the highest planning level: the state.[8] Here we uncover the core of the 'relative social engineering' intrinsic to present-day society in the Netherlands. Dutch society is being socially engineered even today – the Zuidas leaves no doubt as to this fact. It is simply no longer *totally* socially engineered. Instead, the government intervenes only in places that are of strategic importance to particular objectives. It initiates projects for which it delegates both the implementation and the direction, but intervenes in the process at well-considered, strategic moments. It also repeatedly responds to the particular needs and desires of specific target groups and facilitates these as much as possible. This hyperactive role in the National Spatial Framework is compensated by outsourcing the remaining portion of societal organization as much as possible to lower levels of administration (provinces and municipalities) and to the self-regulating capacities of the social field of forces (market partners, societal parties and/or enterprising individuals). A second characteristic of relative social engineering is the dissimulation of state intervention by involving every conceivable stakeholder in the development – economic, societal and cultural players – so that even the Zuidas takes on a quasi-spontaneous character.

At lower levels of scale we run into the same politics of relative social engineering. Every self-respecting city in the Netherlands is now hard at work on generating a creative quantum leap. Municipal authorities are frenetically mapping out creative hotspots, redeveloping sites for creative 'breeding places', designing policy focusing on creative developments, launching promotion campaigns, mobilizing investments in creative sectors, and so on. Here too, in other words, in spite of all the rhetoric to the contrary, we are clearly dealing with social engineering based on a

7. Erik Swyngedouw, 'A New Urbanity? The Ambiguous Politics of Large-Scale Urban Development Projects in European Cities', in: Willem Salet (ed.), *Amsterdam Zuidas. European Space* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2005).
8. See Nota Ruimte. Ruimte voor ontwikkeling ('National Spatial Strategy: Room for Development'), finalized by the Dutch cabinet on 23 April 2004. This illusion is being maintained in the face of all sorts of grave signs to the contrary, such as a major lack of occupancy in the Amsterdam office market, declining interest on the part of market parties, and so on.

more or less clearly formulated ideal vision. Only this is done in a smarter, 'relative' way. Instead of subjecting deprived neighbourhoods to a total makeover, the Dutch government is performing extremely localized precision operations into the social and physical fabric of the city. These interventions are nevertheless linked to grand utopian expectations. Not coincidentally, the parties involved speak of 'gentripuncture' in these cases. In a problem area, like Rotterdam's Spangen district, creative groups are 'injected' in the expectation that their entrepreneurial zeal will restore the countenance of this working-class area to its former glory and spur its residents into action.[9] Just as at the Zuidas, here too we are dealing with a consciously created ambiguity about the true engine of the process of societal change. Even though the so-called gentripunctural interventions would be unthinkable without the massive financial and organizational efforts of the government and even though they are part of well-defined policy programmes based on scientific reports, the operation is nevertheless attributed to the spontaneous entrepreneurial actions of creative actors.

The Perverse Core of Relative Social Engineering

In this we come up against the paradox of the relative social engineering of Dutch society. On the one hand, there is consensus on the fact that social engineering leads to an asphyxiation of the most essential qualities of societal actors: their creativity, entrepreneurship and potential for self-regulation. At the same time, there is agreement that these qualities should be stimulated. This creates the hilarious spectacle of a government that claims to be recusing itself and leaving the societal initiative to bottom-up developments, only to frenetically guide these processes along proper channels and, if they are absent, to generate them. In this the government is fulfilling the same role as the presenter of the popular television programme *Dragons' Den*, in which creative individuals (the pitchers) try to arouse the interest of venture capitalists (the dragons) in order to develop their inventions. The role of the presenter is limited to introducing the pitchers and to laughing or crying along with the pitchers when they discover the market value of their creative proposals. While the initiative to appear before the dragons indubitably lies with the crea-

9. In this we are alluding to, for instance, 'De dichterlijke vrijheid' (poetic licence) – as far as we know one of the first projects to explicitly use the term gentripuncture. This was a project centred on the Wallisblok in Spangen, set up by the Rotterdam Development Corporation in close cooperation with Steunpunt Wonen and Hulshof Architecten. Due to its success, this spontaneous initiative became best practice within the 'Hot Spot Policy' of the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM). In Rotterdam, the project was further developed and refined in the project '169 Klushuizen' (169 houses to fix up).

tive individuals, the presenter, who always stays in the background, represents the vanishing mediator of this ostensibly spontaneous occasion.

Relative social engineering acquires a perverse quality in that societal actors may have more room to give free rein to their creativity, but under the strict condition that they not only be creative, but exploit their creativity in the correct, enterprising way. If they fail to do this, disciplinary sanctions follow. In the process the Dutch government, in the area of cultural policy, is increasingly taking on the guise of the *Dragons' Den* venture capitalists: the financial resources of 'uncreative' breeding grounds are implacably slashed or even cut off entirely, with the resulting available budgets being reinvested in so-called 'points of excellence'. These are top cultural institutions from which a high 'return value' is expected in the area of international allure, economic suitability or societal benefit. This modus operandi represents, within culture policy, the variant of the previously mentioned National Spatial Framework.

This far-reaching government interference in the field of culture in the Netherlands is anything but an isolated case. On the contrary, it is the local version of the philosophy of relative social engineering that prevails on a global scale today. Think, for example, of the way Western powers, in countries like Afghanistan, Iraq or Palestine, are actively creating the right conditions for the facilitation of the innate thirst for democracy of the local populations. When the population misuses its democratic rights and chooses undesirable parties to defend its interests, such as Hamas in Palestine, extreme sanctions follow and the paternalism of the heyday of the socially engineered society makes a grand comeback.

A Different View of the Global World Order Is Possible

The politicization of the global world order, therefore, lies not in an 'ethical critique', but in rendering visible its 'relatively socially engineered' character and hidden paternalism. A unique political moment can consist of the public acknowledgement of this suppressed and obscene truth as well as its integration in its official, post-political self-representation. The challenge is therefore to resist the temptation to immediate postulate an 'alternative globalization'. In the first instance, the global world order demands an alternative historiography – new historiographic myths and monuments – that does justice to the denied socially engineered character of its spontaneous guise.

In concrete terms, we propose the following. In another context Lieven De Cauter, protesting the harsh immigration policy of the European Union, proposed nominating the wall around Ceuta – along with all detention centres for illegal immigrants on the European main-

land – as the culture monument of 1998 (in the context of the Jan Hagel Prize) with as a tag line: 'Observers predict that it will someday become a tourist attraction.'[10] Building on this, we propose nominating the light coercion with which creatives are being sent into 'the dragon's den' in search of microcredits – made necessary by the closure of uncreative 'breeding places' and the concentration of culture budgets in elite creative institutions – as the 'culture moment of 2008'. Without De Cauter's ethical cynicism, however. We are deadly serious. Today the actions of the government within the creative sector might appear as cruel yet necessary. The future will undoubtedly tell whether this disciplinary state intervention will have contributed in an unprecedented way to the making of a new generation of self-sufficient and decisive creative entrepreneurs, who cheerfully let their creativity be tapped for the dream we all share: a strong international competitive position for the Netherlands within the global world order.

10. See footnote 17 to the essay 'The Capsular Civilization' in: De Cauter, *The Capsular Civilization*, op. cit. (note 1), 51-54.

ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles)

Bazar Curieux

The City Museum as a Public Structure

ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles), via unsolicited proposals, investigates possibilities for new public domain in the contemporary city. Elma van Boxel and Kristian Koreman call for a philosophy of physical social engineering that, because of its public responsibility and long-term vision, would need to be demonstrated primarily by a government. At a time when private commissions and private initiatives are being embraced unquestioningly, the government should reflect on its core responsibility of public leadership. This cannot be expected of citizens and market players. Social engineering is an ideal that can make itself felt once more in an increasingly splintering society. Perhaps no longer as abstract, political propaganda, but in fact as a physical, urban reality.

The Evolution of Faith in Social Engineering

1970s: Distribution

Distribution of knowledge, power and income (Joop den Uyl). Through fundamental government interventions in society, using such available resources as cultural policy, housing and a social safety net, a society could be guided and improved. Back then, the consumer was still a citizen and the market player a marginal entrepreneur.

1980s and 1990s: Specialization

Freedom to Choose (Milton Friedman); in other words,

FUCK SOCIAL ENGINEERING AND LONG LIVE THE MARKET!

With the gradual collapse of the great political ideologies, a call emerged for more individual freedom. Freedom to fashion your life yourself, by choosing your own products, from Walkman to home. The market mechanism, by making its specific power processes run more efficiently, exercised a magic attraction on the political establishment. In no time, politics itself became a market, focused on target audience-oriented short-term thinking.

From 2000 to 2010: The Fall of the Target Group

There is talk of a radical democracy, in which everyone participates endlessly. The citizen has become a consumer and the public space a consumer-oriented seduction machine. In the grip of the market, it now seems impossible to reflect on long-term effects. A strong vision seems required to create connections within the gradually splintering public domain. In spite of the government's retrenchment, it seems to face a major responsibility. What is needed is limited social engineering that ensures that public structures are guaranteed in crucial places.

Liquidations in the Cultural Circuit

Segregation is hitting the public domain. Sites are increasingly being allocated to a specific target audience, resulting in countless 'successful' skate parks and extravagant, well-attended festivals. The point is no longer to get to know the other, for public space is now programmed to be risk-free and exclusive. There is even something like *Idols for Street Musicians*, because the authorities want to ensure that consumers will enjoy their urban product. The public domain has to be profitable, and stressed people just spend less. City centres are slowly turning into homogeneous shopping paradises, usually with the same chain shops, and are therefore intended for a limited target audience. One giant shopping area naturally leads to another. Anything smaller in size is not profitable and therefore not interesting – with a uniform scale distribution of the urban fabric as a result.

Another symptom of the effect of the market on the public domain is the erosion of the cultural programme. A cultural programme, by definition, seems too expensive and is therefore under tremendous pressure. Institutions have to meet their visitor targets, and either become 'low-brow' or are in danger of closing down. At the same time, the cultural programme is increasingly used as an economic stimulus. In Rotterdam this has resulted in the relocation of the Fotomuseum, the Lantaren/Venster cinema and the Academy of Architecture and Urban Design, with the aim of reviving new city districts. For convenience's sake, the intricate connections these places have in the city are forgotten, and they end up like aliens in a new context. This development too is detrimental to the public structure of the city.

It is precisely in the public domain of cultural meeting places, formed by schools, libraries, museums, sports facilities and debate centres that necessary interaction takes place. Along with the network of streets and squares they form the public structures of the city and of society, where diverse segments of the population are challenged to make use of them. In a society undergoing splintering, there is more

Poster commenting on the economic misuse of the cultural programme in Rotterdam.

As a response to the relocation of the cultural programme, such as the Academy of Architecture and Urban Design, an initiative for a programme in socially engineered urbanity, 'De Dependance' (The Annex), housed in a section of Rotterdam also threatened with demolition.

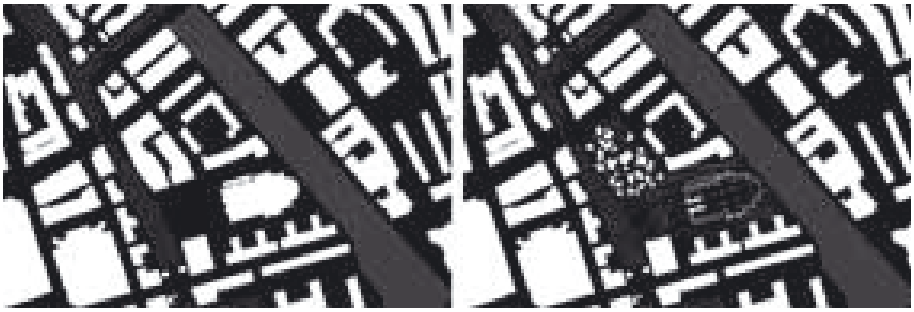
and more need for a neutralizing, accessible and connective public domain.

Instead of abstract, political propaganda for new social engineering, the government could in fact play a role in the physical activation of such a public structure and thereby provide a demonstration of a potential urban reality.

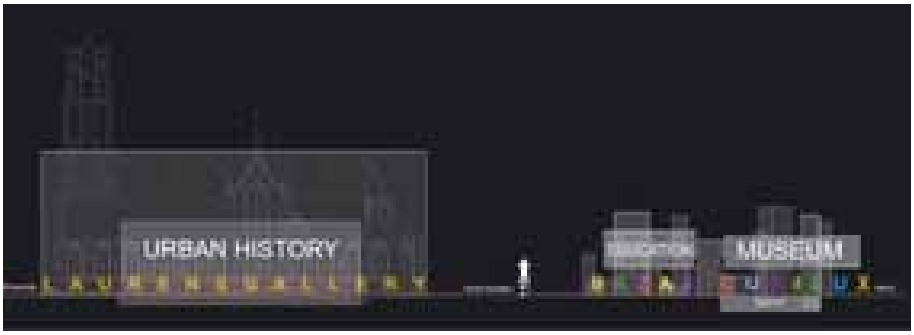
The City Museum as a Public Structure

The planned City Museum in Rotterdam, where the history of the city will be told, represents a major opportunity for the government to shoulder its public responsibility. The City Museum as a public structure in the urban fabric.

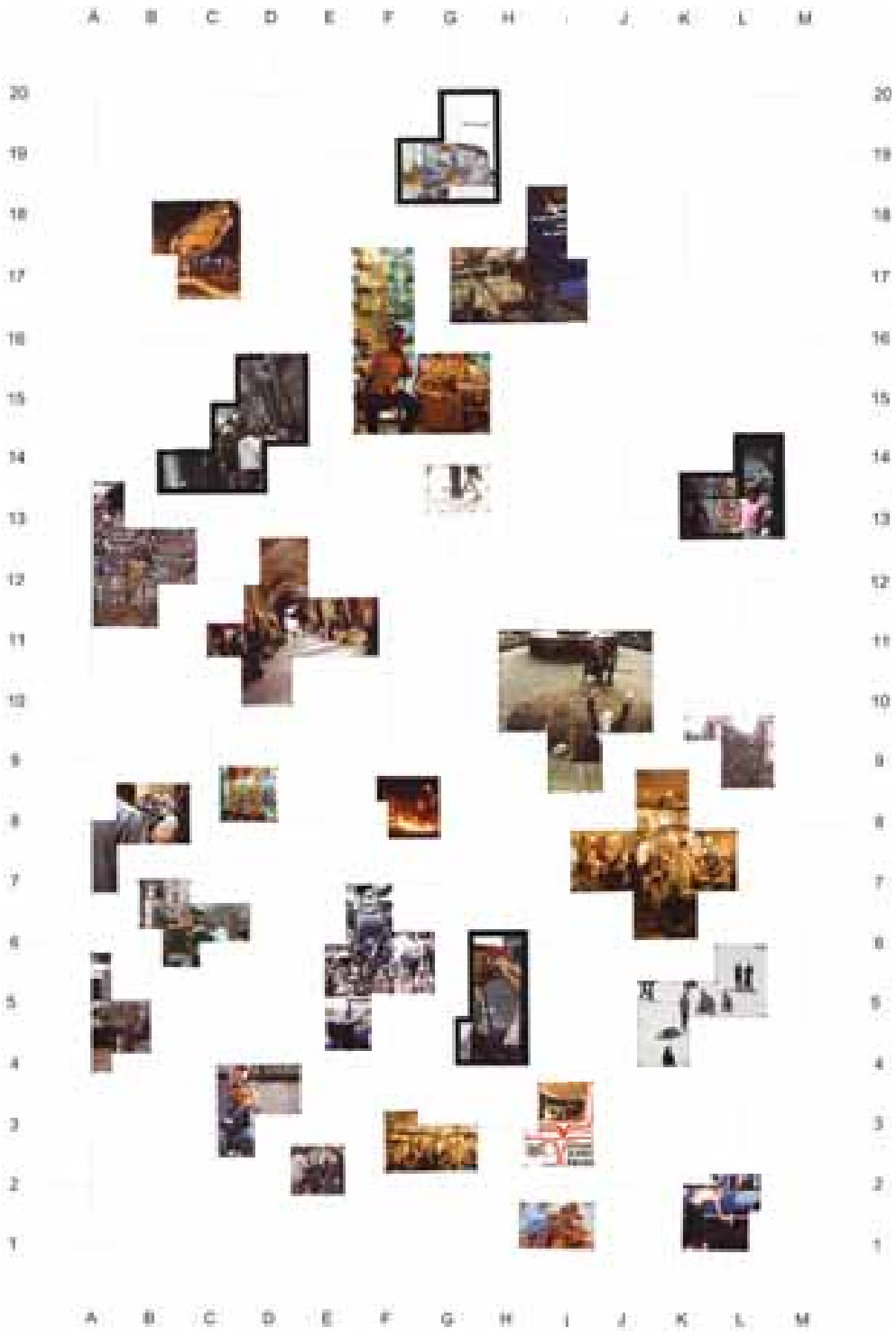
The city centre of Rotterdam features a great range of generic retail chains, in sharp contrast with the intricately laid out shopping streets on the outskirts, where the more informal economy of small-scale shops offering exotics wares is established. This is the culture of the immigrants, responsible for a significant proportion of the city's history. They have had a major impact on the course of that history and therefore deserve a significant place in the public network.



Nolli map of Laurenskwartier in Rotterdam, from closed block to bazaar.



Basic cross section.



Bazar Curieux map.

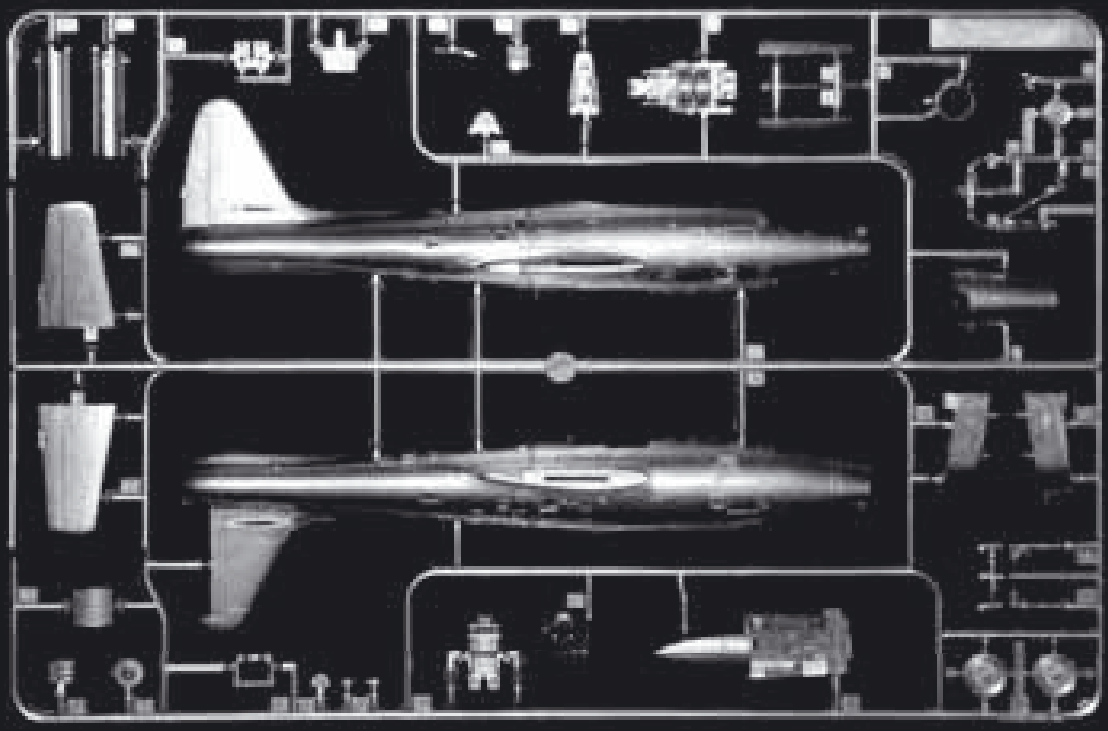
View from the Meent.

Bazar Curieux in its context.

We propose interpreting the City Museum as a new urban space, named ‘Bazar Curieux’. In order to enrich the standard urban framework, the area is to be set up as a bazaar. This will introduce a new scale and typology in the public space. The volumes of the museum are raised by a collective of 26 columns. The columns will become spaces that can be used as kiosks or studios. Some of them contain a neighbourhood in residence or a hotel room at the top. The low-threshold occupation of the spaces means that a continually changing quantity of activities can be developed, from traditional painting to exotic cuisine, from grocer to carpenter. The small-scale cultural and economic programme that will be housed here will generate a different kind of urbanity, focused on the manufacturability of cultural diversity. In the face of homogenization, this set-up opts for an informal, highly risky combination of very divergent ‘target audiences’, in the knowledge that cultural confrontation can lead to a more tolerant society.

By installing spaces like this in the urban network, target interventions can be made in the social structures of the city. Liberal polarizations can be neutralized or homogenizations enriched by alternative spaces. Social engineering is literally interpreted as the creation of physical structures that facilitate or impede certain behaviours. This will make the City Museum a demonstration of a potential society.

Partizan Publik



partizan publik

IDENTIFICATION

In 2005 a group of young enthusiasts who found common ground in their urge to move & to move on founded Partizan Publik. Intrigued by the possibilities and impossibilities for people to manipulate their surroundings, Partizan Publik is always looking for new ways of confrontation, inspiration and development in the public sphere.

Partizan Publik is a think and action tank devoted to a braver society. The Partizans explore, produce and implement social, political and cultural instruments, which generate positive and sustainable change to people and their surroundings. As such we take part in the complex and continuous process of global social engineering.

EXPLANATION

'Social engineering' is a controversial and highly politically incorrect term. We know. The practice of engineering societies is associated with colonial and apartheid repression and oppressive rule. We despise. In our brave new world in which colonisators, colonials and postcolonials battle for identity and space social engineering might be more complex, but nevertheless just as present. We REclaim. Partizan Publik and others examine to what extent societies are shaped, stylised, organised and eventually created by power over people.

VOLUME #16: ENGINEERING SOCIETY
What: Publication
Where: Global
When: January 2008 – June 2008
Aim: To provoke thinking and discussion on social engineering, and architecture as an instrument to that end.
Outcome: Collaborative publication, due June 2008. Project Volume is a cooperation between Archis Foundation, OMA, C-Lab.

ARMENIA DREAMING
What: Collaborative research and exhibition.
Where: Yerevan, Armenia
When: May - June 2008
Aim: Yerevan is a dream city, a city constructed out of myth, utopia, desire, dreams and longing. Through building a Dream Depot of post Soviet urban imaginaries in Yerevan we intended to engineer an understanding of the intentional and unintentional forces that are shaping this post-Soviet city.
Outcome: Group exhibition, Dream Depot.
In cooperation with: Dutch Art Institute, Vardan Azatyan, Vahram Aghasyan, Utopiana.am, Open Society Institute.

DETROIT UNREAL ESTATE AGENCY
What: Research, action and exhibition.
Where: Detroit, Michigan
When: March 2008 onward
Aim: Detroit is a post-capitalist city: the world-famous case of the shrinking city. After Ford and GM ripped the economic heart out of the city, what is the value and use of the 90.000 something empty plots in Detroit?
Outcome: project on-going
In cooperation with: Andrew Herscher, Mireille Rodier, Malkit Shoshan, Femke Lutgerink

SOCIAL ENGINEERING IN THE AMSTERDAM METROPOLE
What: Research and action course
Where: Amsterdam
When: February - June 2008
Aim: Social change at the Damrak, Timorplein, in Nieuwendam-Noord and Westerpark. To develop a new praxis of social engineering, to conjure up a result-oriented university course.
Outcome: project on-going.
In cooperation with: Amongst others, Martijn van Tol, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam Municipality, Ymere housing cooperation, Stichting Doen.

KABUL: SECURE CITY, PUBLIC CITY

What: Research and publication
Where: Kabul, Afghanistan
When: October 2007
Why: Returning refugees made Kabul one of the fastest growing cities in the world. A radical choice in this make-shift metropolis is wheather to strive for inclusive or exclusive security.
Aim: To critique the appropriation of public space and to contribute to a more just spatial politics.
Outcome: Local network, publication, plans for a two week artist/architect/activist clinic on urban development.
In cooperation with: Amongst others, Niloufar Tajeri, Ajmal Maiwandi, Jolyan Leslie, Jeanno Gaussi, Ole Bouman, George Agnew and Lilet Breddels.

MUTANNABI CAR BOMB WRECKS

What: Workshops, lectures, exhibition of wrecks and public action
Where: Amsterdam, The Hague, Enschede, Rotterdam
When: June 2007 – December 2007
Why: On March 5 2007, a car bomb exploded on the famous Mutanabbi Book Market in Baghdad. What is the extend and value of our personal, political and moral empathy with such an act?
Aim: A public research into the boundaries of personal empathy and collective responsibility.
In cooperation with: Amongst others. Robert Kluijver, Saleh Hassan Faris, Abdelkader Benali, Chris Keulemans, Aysel Sabahoglu, Evert-Jan Grit, Jonas Staal & Jack Segbars.

ZOOM IN ZOOM OUT

What: Publication
Where: Netherlands
When: May 2007
Aim: In the European view on the Middle East, the oriental gaze seems to have smoothly morphed in a different, equally determinist gaze: that of the region as a conflict zone.
We compiled a 32 page magazine that proposes an alternative cultural politics concerning this region.
Outcome: Single issue magazine distributed with Vrij Nederland magazine
With contributions by amongst others Robert Fisk, Stephano Boeri, Rami Khouri, Amirali Ghasemi, Geert van Kesteren.

SIM POLITICS: A WAY OUT OF THE WAR

What: Simulation of Afghanistan peace negotiation
Where: Amsterdam, Utrecht, Ottawa
When: June 2007 - September 2007
Why: Six years into the war, a military solution seems a far cry. What are the possibilities to negotiate a way out of the war? A simulation exercise for policymakers, politicians, activists and academics to provoke a pro-active policy path for change.
Outcome: Public sessions in the Netherlands, closed session and media scandal in Canada.
In cooperation with: Clingendael Institute, Fatma Wakil, Ahmed Rashid and the Senlis Council.

STUDIO BEIRUT

What: Design workshops and public actions
Where: Beirut
When: July 2007
Aim: After the July 2006 war, Beirut is undertaking yet another fierce project of rebuilding. What is the role and function of public space in this fragmented city? Interventions on four public spaces: the former Central Station, the Cola district (refugee camp), the Corniche (littoral boulevard) and the Garage Charles Helou (international transport hub).
Outcome: Research, interventions, exhibition and publication of design solutions.
In cooperation with: Beirut Municipality, American University Beirut, Academie Lebanais des Beaux Arts, Archis and Pearl Foundations, and many many more.

THE LOST ROOM

What: Research, action and exhibition
Where: Beirut
When: summer 2007
Aim: The Lebanese National Museum gives an account of the history of the country starting in a glorious Bronze Age, ending halfway the nineteenth century. A modern national history is contested terrain. We set out to give an account of a possible contemporary national history.
Outcome: A real-life annotated history of Beirut along collective memories of favorite places and sweet memories.
In cooperation with: Studio Beirut workshop participants, Edwin Gardner and Dirk-Jan Visser.

POST SOVIET URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN TBILISI

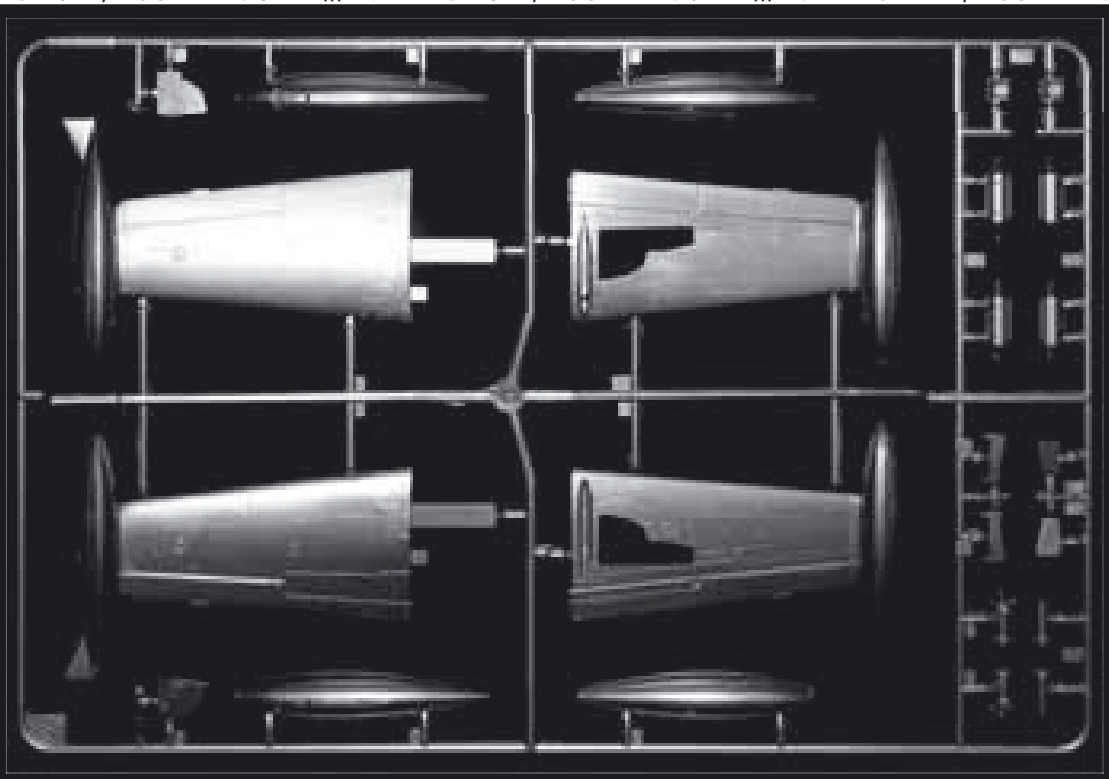
What: Design workshops and public actions
Where: Tbilisi
When: March 2007
Aim: Georgia's post soviet transformation is a messy process. The virulent economic development misses out on a number of groups in society, leading to displacement and urban disintegration. The workshop intervened on three sites: Hotel Abkhazia (a refugee building), the Varketili district (typical Soviet blocks) and the Kirov Factory (an industrial area).
Outcome: research, design, interventions, exhibition and publication.
In cooperation with: F.A.S.T., Nana Qutateladze, Levan Asabashvili and Vakhtang Kasrelishvil.

AS TURKEY TURNS

What: Research, debate and publication
Where: Amsterdam
When: December 2006
Aim: To provoke the discussion on the influence of Turkish media on sense of identity amongst Turks in the Netherlands.
Outcome: A tactical map of Turkish parties, media outlets and others in defense of 'Turkishness'.
In cooperation with: Selli Altunterim, Nuri Karabulut, Mehmet Ülger and Press Now.

PUBLIC SPACE INVADERS

What: Action
Where: Beirut
When: November 2006
Aim: Beirut is a fragmented city, its areas are exclusive on the basis of religious-ethnic identity and class. To contest the exclusive appropriation of key public spaces, we annotated public space at the Corniche, Martyr and Sassine Squares, and in Hamra, Solidere, Monot and Gemayzeh.
Outcome: Critical acclaim, media coverage, repetition.
In cooperation with: Christiaan Fruneaux, Pascale Hares, Rani al Rajji, Joe Mounzer, Aukje Dekker, Steve Eid, Cara and Gressy and Layla



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Special thanks in all projects goes to Christiaan Fruneaux and Studio BOEM

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Jeanne van Heeswijk and Dennis Kaspori

Marketplaces for Cultural Collaboration

Jeanne van Heeswijk
and Dennis Kaspori

Marketplaces for Cultural Collaboration

Jeanne van Heeswijk and Dennis Kaspori
Jeanne van Heeswijk and Dennis Kaspori work together on projects in which they endeavour to stimulate cultural production and to develop or reorganize public domains.
An essential element of their practice is the establishment and management of an infrastructure for cultural exchange, platforms for dialogue and care networks that can create conditions for more inclusive forms of urban design.

The development of a city is a collective process. In that regard, the city can always be transformed, and there is great faith in the potential for developing models and instruments that enable these communities to participate in building the city. Yet this faith ignores the innocence

or the naivety of this idea of transformability being based on a harmonious togetherness.

Enabling the individual or the community to participate in building the city means more than presenting them with a few choices. For this would mean that we can still only participate within the already established conditions, such as public comment channels or classical forms of protest including demonstrations and standard procedures. On the contrary, it is precisely these conditions, the notions of how we wish to and are able to live together, that we should be able to question again and again within this process. Offering a range of choices, in that regard, is one last convulsion of the supply-side transformability idea that still views the citizen as a consumer.

The question is whether we are capable of creating a place, which we call the public domain, in which, in discussion with one another, we can face up to the confrontation and in which we can address one another as co-producers of the city. Can we make this arena of tension visible and develop instruments that make it possible to intervene in that area? Can we collectively develop a narrative about the city in which everyone has a place? And can we then develop the instruments that enable people to genuinely fill in this place and deepen, sharpen or question the narrative?

Project Descriptions

In the former Labour Council building in Rotterdam, 15 small housing-work units have been built, specially intended for young people endeavouring, from their vocational training, to arrive at a form of specialized entrepreneurship focused on craftsmanship. Freewheelers is a one-year programme intended to develop this venue into a breeding ground for cultural entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurs selected work together on new products and services related to the bicycle. Freewheelers was developed under the aegis of Vestia.

Case Study: Rotterdam Skills City vs. the Creative City

Rotterdam faces a huge challenge in urban restructuring. In the coming decade, about 20,000 dwellings will have to be replaced. With this operation, the city is attempting to play catch-up and establish a global position as an attractive location. Rotterdam is attempting to make the transition from a workers' city to a creative city.

To this end, Rotterdam is working on an attractive image, on external adhesion, in order to attract industry from all corners of the world. This external focus, however, will remain inadequate as long as it is not matched by a reinforcement of the internal cohesion of the city. Co-positioning is therefore required: the external, image-based positioning must be supported by internal positioning, based on social cohesion and cultural infrastructure.

In the last year, Rotterdam's ambitions to develop into a creative city have taken increasingly concrete forms, with the presentation of the new Vision for the City 2030. This Vision for the City outlines a perspective in which the emphasis lies on physical aspects and economics.

But is urban development well served by this physical approach, or does building also entail the construction of relationships and the production of urban consciousness? The question of whether the high-culture economic impetus of the creative industry is sufficient or whether it still requires an integral translation was answered by Richard Florida: 'Creativity in the world of work is not limited to members of the Creative Class . . . I strongly believe that the key to improving the lot of underpaid, underemployed and disadvantaged people lies not in social welfare programs or low-end make-work jobs . . . but rather in tapping the creativity of these people.'

Marga Weimans, inspired by the Afrikaandermarkt and in cooperation with local handicrafts artisans and sewing studios, is developing a new fashion label for Freehouse. The line will be shown in Paris next year. This project is being carried out in cooperation with Kosmopolis Rotterdam.

Cindy van den Bremen is developing the project Suit It Yourself Sari with market traders. Based on fabrics on offer in the market and using simple alterations, they are developing new products that can be made on site and to measure. This project is being carried out in cooperation with Pact op Zuid, Vestia and Kosmopolis Rotterdam.

Tapping talents and developing skills should be organized in a much more energetic way. The integral connection of internship trajectories to the urban network could be the key to this. To learn is to participate. And are the qualities of city residents not more optimally developed when they are taken seriously in their creative contributions and addressed as co-producers of an urban society?

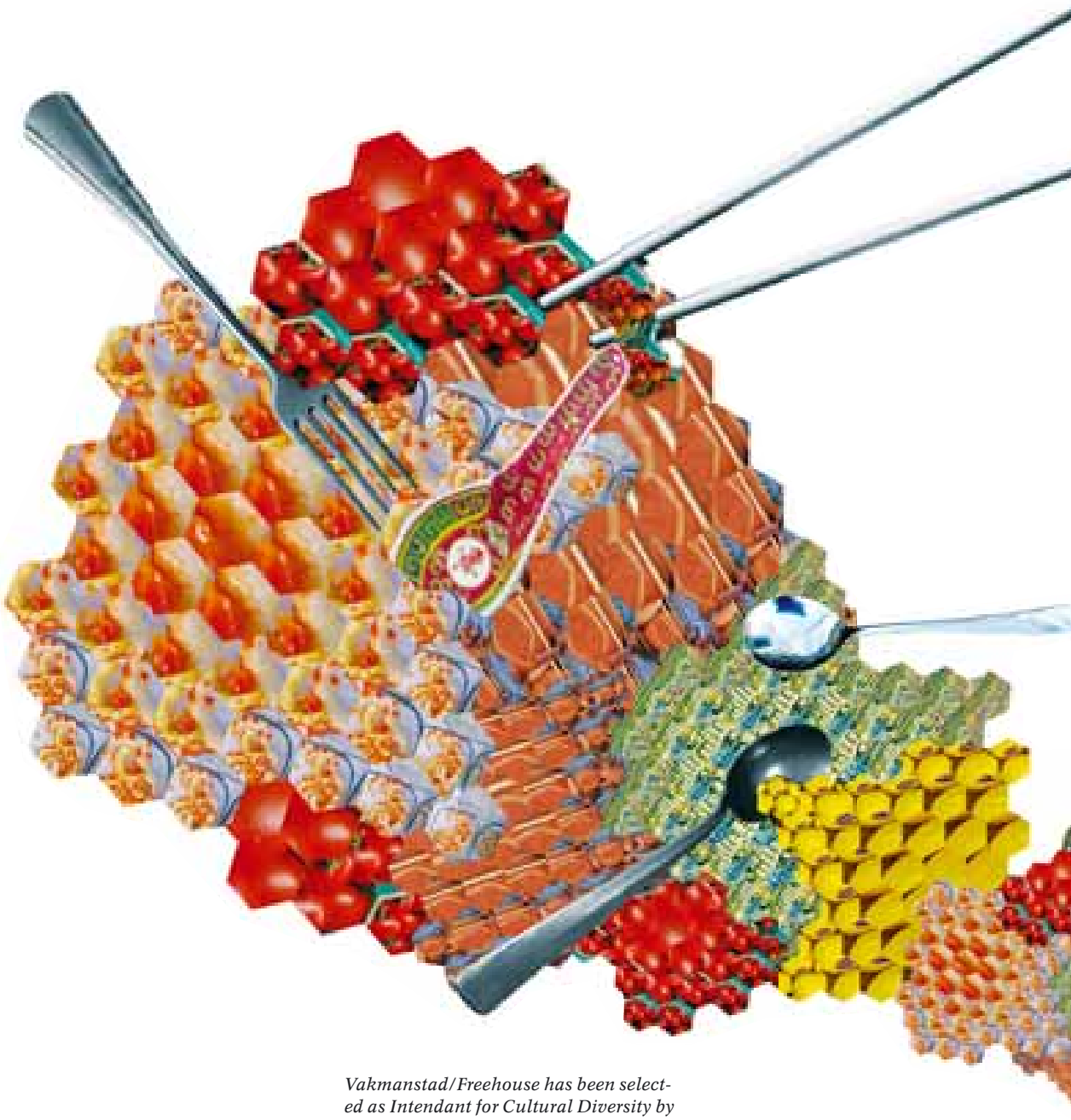
Co-producers are stakeholders and interested parties who connect, formally or informally, with others and in the process create public space and communication. In this relational context they share their involvement in the city: communication and participation interlink here. Rotterdam Vakmanstad (Skills City) initiates and stimulates these interactions as co-productions of public domain.

The idea of co-producers is inextricably linked to the idea of the public domain. Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, in their book *In Search of New Public Domain* (2001), define the public domain as those places where an exchange between different social groups can take place and actually does take place: 'The shift towards a cultural-geographic approach involves a departure from the notion of absolutism in ascertaining the value or meaning of spaces. The essence of a cultural geography is precisely that analysis of the ambiguity, or, in more political terms, the struggle between various meanings. Designing public domain can then become a question of the stimulation of informal manifestations of diversity and the avoidance of interventions that are intended to make such manifestations impossible.'

The public domain, they say, is primarily a (cultural) experience. We must no longer consider the public domain the result of purely economic and legal considerations, but rather begin to see it and use it as the (per-) formative basis of a city under development.

Debra Solomon, in cooperation with local food suppliers, is developing a collective restaurant that creates new cultural, culinary and economic links among the businesses involved. The dishes are sold from a cart that, as a cultural embassy for Rotterdam's Afrikaander district, can pop up in other parts of the city. This project is being carried out in cooperation with Kosmopolis Rotterdam and Imagine IC.

Inclusive urban design does not mean importing capacities from the outside. It should, first and foremost, mobilize the physical and sociocultural capital that is available in the existing residential area. The public domain provides a platform for exchange, for participation and communication. In the process it underpins a broadly supported and integral idea about living together in the community.



Vakmanstad/Freehouse has been selected as Intendant for Cultural Diversity by the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture project fund.

Practice: Freehouse, a Model for Cultural Entrepreneurship

In concrete terms Freehouse is striving to set up spaces in which local entrepreneurs, young people and artists can come together to exchange knowledge, experiences and ideas. This exchange will lead to a form of cultural production that can reinforce the economic position of those involved and makes visible the cultural process of conceptualization and realization, thereby stimulating cultural self-awareness.

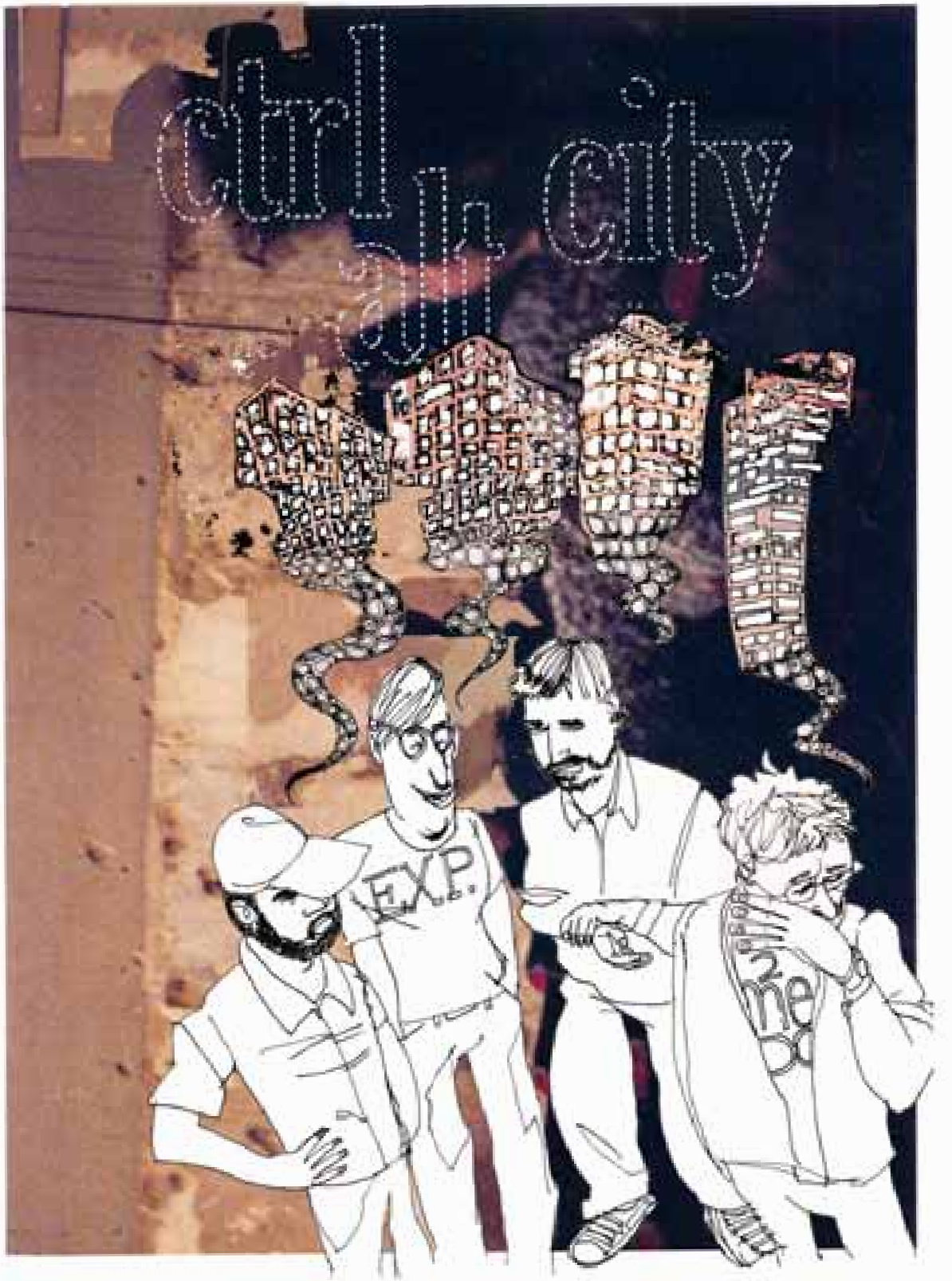
An existing model is used as a starting point, and research will be done to determine how this model can be translated to the current and local situation of Rotterdam. The existing model is the 'Free House' or *Freihaus*. This medieval and baroque model created 'free' places for 'outsiders', where they could settle under favourable conditions in acknowledgement of their positive contribution to public space and culture in general. The Freehouse accommodates a group of 'outsiders' who do not possess the usual social, cultural and economic infrastructure to participate in political and social life but are active within more alternative forms of the economy.

By setting up workshops, carrying out interventions and creating living models, Freehouse is attempting, in addition to stimulating the above-mentioned collaboration, to provide impetus to thinking about a more inclusive and intrinsic development of the city of Rotterdam.

Flexmens

Text:
Merijn
Oudenampsen,
illustrations:
Thijs Vissia

Open Source Urbanism: A First Step


Child in City
E.X.P.

Forty years after the revolt of May '68, the prevailing opinion seems to be one of aggrieved jealousy, disguised as the wisdom of experience. A series of retrospective newspaper articles seeks to finish once and for all with a troubled legacy. Writers stubbornly struggle to distance themselves from the idea that idealism and engagement could mean anything other than the charitable causes espoused by pop stars and society figures. The *soixante-huitards* are dismissed as sandbox idealists, weak-minded and aimless sympathizers of terrorism, who in their unbridled naivety thought the world could be changed; we know better by now. It's the gist of several months of disappointing newspaper reading.

What all this disparagement of the '68 activists is meant to cloak – without succeeding particularly well – is the bottomless vacuity of today's politics and the loss of any horizon along which social development might take place. Where are the utopian visions today? Where are the visions of the future, for that matter? With the exception of the development scenarios of consultancy firms, planning bureaus and policy advisers, no one is willing to offer any sort of vision about a collectively desirable future. The world cannot be remade, we are told, when it is in fact being irreversibly reproduced day after day.

Urban space is where the spirit of '68 – in essence a struggle against any form of authority – particularly manifested itself, not just in Paris, but also in the inner cities of the USA, where the violent repression of the civil-rights movement degenerated into full-scale riots, in the streets of Prague, where the rebellion turned against the Soviet occupation, or in bullet-riddled Saigon, target of the Vietnamese Tet Offensive. In Amsterdam the spirit of '68 was embodied by the Provo and Kabouter movements, the Nieuwmarkt protests, and the general resistance of residents against the form of autocratic modernist urban development in force at the time. A small revolution took place, one that still defines the structure of Dutch cities to this day.

It is therefore in the area of urban development – in Dutch history one of the most fertile grounds for the development of radical politics – that an impressive system of procedures was created to prevent conflict and not so much parry criticism as render it toothless. 'Interactive policy making', 'open plan processes' with 'sounding-board groups', 'consultation procedures', 'co-production': the quantity of terms used to describe the participation of residents in contemporary urban development gives the impression that we are living in a veritable Mecca of democracy. Ultimately, however, the marvellous participation models result in a disappointing reality of notification and information, with a few therapeutic public-comment meetings to calm tempers a little. For it's too late for

any real decisions. The political establishment now hides behind a hedge of semantic impenetrability: urban development plans are deliberately drawn up in a jargon that no resident can comprehend. We live in a so-called post-political age, where the framework of politics is set and remains unquestioned by any political party, and within which tiny alterations are the subject of intense negotiations.

The post-political framework of contemporary urban policy is that of the entrepreneurial city. An entrepreneurial mindset has taken over city government, where the drive towards competition among cities has supplanted every other policy consideration. As much care as is being devoted to the strategic positioning of cities in global flows of human and financial capital, so little interest does there seem to be in adopting the existing population of the city as the premise for any integral vision of city politics. We have arrived at a clearly atopian juncture,[1] safely removed from any utopian philosophy and at the same time from the dystopian darkness.

The only fertile domain of utopian politics today seems to exist in the digital world, in the open-source software movement FLOSS,[2] where an all too real battle is being fought for the public, open nature of the Internet. Although there have been attempts to pull these politics out of the computer domain and transpose them to analogue everyday life, this has aroused surprisingly little interest in the social mainstream. The first step in the Netherlands to translate the cybernetic to the urban domain, strangely enough, is coming from the real-estate sector, which describes its projects using terms like *urban hardware* (urban infrastructure) and *urban software* (urban programming). It is no longer just about the bricks. Project developers have discovered that genuine added value lies in linking the physical hardware (the built environment) to sociocultural software (practices, identities, and so forth). This is why project developers now almost routinely invite artists and other cultural actors, on a permanent or temporary basis, to 'add some flavour' to as yet unfinished real estate, in order to jack up the prices. Almost every large-scale project in Amsterdam is now associated with a new cultural institution; the Zuidas has a design museum, the South Banks of the IJ have the Muziekgebouw, and the Overhoeks project the new Filmmuseum. Even in the restructuring of social housing, cultural branding has been turned into a new trend.

Interestingly, these computer terms of software and hardware were translated to urban space in the 1970s by the Pop Art architecture group Archigram,[3] to promote the use of soft and flexible materials such as the inflatable bubble instead of the modernist hardware of steel and cement. Along with contemporaries such as the Italian architecture group Archizoom and texts such as Jonathan Raban's *Soft City*, Archigram

1 — I use atopia here in the sense of the non-place, the dominance of the generic. See the essay 'On Atopia' by Italian architect Vittorio Gregotti, in: Vittorio Gregotti, *Inside Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

2 — See the article by McKenzie Wark, 'Copyright, Copyleft, Copygift', *Open, no. 12 (NAi Publishers in collaboration with SKOR, 2007).*

aimed its critique at the monotonous and rational functionalism of modernism, presenting a more organic conception of the city as a living organism (comparable views made Aldo van Eyck the quintessential architectural spokesman of the Nieuwmarkt battle against urban modernization). The term urban software thus dates back to the 1960s and 1970s, with software as the social programming of a city and hardware as its infrastructure. Just as the Situationists experimented with bottom-up software through psychogeography and the *dérive*, so did subjective, organic and bottom-up approaches develop into a spearhead of the utopian urbanism of the time. French urbanist Henri Lefebvre, an important source of inspiration for the urban social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, formulated 'the right to the city' in the 1960s: '. . . the right to the city means the right of citizens and city residents . . . to take part in all the networks and circuits of communication, information and exchange.'[4]

In light of current notions of cities as centres for trade in and exploitation of knowledge (the 'creative knowledge economy'), this formulation of the right to the city seems more imperative than ever, as well as being intrinsically connected to open-source politics. For, in the neoliberal city, this libertarian approach to software is being replaced by an increasingly tightly regulated and coded version, in which urban programming often comes to serve narrow economic functionalism. Through the introduction of codes of behaviour, local ordinances and an increased police presence, streets are kept free of unsanctioned street scenes and undesirable use. By means of the creative city policy, the neoliberal city encourages and promotes the influx of highly educated residents, even as cutbacks are imposed on the creative public domain such as education and the cultural sector and lower education levels have been in crisis for years. Notions of cultural and creative entrepreneurship are becoming dominant in the cultural sector, formerly grounded in political and aesthetic considerations. Culture as a consumer product is developing into a crucial resource in the branding battle among cities. In the process, cultural branding becomes an attempt to construct competitive urban software products that serve to 'programme' the urban space in the most economically favourable fashion possible. The neoliberal city is becoming the Microsoft of the spatial knowledge economy: it chooses branding over substance and refuses to makes its source code – its political agenda – public. With the 'kernel'[5] of the city increasingly focused on intercity competition, policy no longer needs legitimization – the need to be a 'top city' is reason enough. It seems an almost inevitable necessity, as a response to this trend, to create a programme that translates the demands of the FLOSS movement to the urban space. The realization of a public domain dedicated to the

3 — F.M. Ribeiro and R. Spitz, 'Archigram's Analogical Approach to Digitality', *International Journal of Architectural Computing, vol. 4, no. 3, September 2006, 20-32.*

4 — Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 194-195.

bottom-up production of knowledge and power, and an open urban source code that encourages, rather than complicates, participation; these, at any event, are two essential ingredients of a yet to be determined method for open-source urbanism.

5 — In computer science, the 'kernel' is the central component of most computer operating systems. The most important function of the kernel is to manage the system's resources, which comes down to the communication between the software and the hardware of the computer. In its urban metaphor, this makes the kernel the central locus of power in the city: the governance structure that has developed around the city government. For more on kernels, see W. Wulf, 'HYDRA: the Kernel of a Multiprocessor Operating System', *Communications of the ACM,* vol. 17, no. 6, 1974.

Literature

— Valentyn Byvanck (ed.), *Superstudio: The Middelburg Lectures* (Middelburg: Zeeuws Museum, 2005).

— Ivan Chtcheglov, 'Formulary for a New Urbanism', translated by Ken Knabb, Interactivist Info Exchange, August 2006, http://info.interactivist.net/article.pl?sid=06/08/25/191240&mode=nested&tid=9

— Tim Hall and Phil Hubbard (eds.), *The Entrepreneurial City. Geographies of Politics, Regimes and Representation* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 1998).

— Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nichelson Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

— Jonathan Raban, *Soft City* (London: Hamilton, 1974).

— Bart van Ratingen, 'Ik Zie Ik Zie Wat Jij Niet Ziet, Vijf Ontwikkelaars over de "Creatieve Stad", haar Mogelijkheden en haar Beperkingen', *Real Estate Magazine*, May 2006.

BAVO

The New Myth of Relative Social Engineering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In the struggle against the global world order, Lieven De Cauter calls for a rehabilitation of social engineering and the realization that political choices do matter.[1] And rightly so. The triumphal march of the global world order – at least at an ideological level – is being made possible by an apolitical view of society. We see it as an 'occurrence', a spontaneous play of conflicting forces that constantly short-circuit one another and seek out synergies. The role of politics has been reduced to merely 'policing' the orderly course of this play of forces, without the ambition to want to guide it, as was the case during the heyday of the socially engineered society.[2] Nonetheless 'social engineering' still treads the societal stage. Monitoring, after all, also concerns the safeguarding of the essential conditions for the societal occurrence, such as parliamentary democracy, press freedom and the free circulation of goods and capital, conditions that the 'police troops' of the global world order defend with force if necessary.

Remarkably, however, De Cauter also immediately puts the brakes on his call for a 'repoliticization' by immediately speaking about a 'relative' social engineering. At first glance this defensive approach is understandable. To again advocate total social engineering would not only be unacceptable, but above all not credible, given the current consensus on the causal link between social engineering and totalitarianism. The social engineering of society has become an anathema over which hangs a corny paternalist haze. De Cauter's emphasis on the relative, however, is more than merely strategic. With it he expresses the more general conceptual movement to make thinking and acting in terms of a utopia – the framework within which attempts at social engineering were invariably undertaken – acceptable once more by no longer viewing it as a 'guiding-image', but as a 'counter-image'. The term utopia no longer refers to the representation of an alternative model of society as the guiding thread for a political project. On the contrary, it is understood in terms of an 'unceasing indictment' against the inequities intrinsic to the existing world order.[3]

De Cauter himself seems not to believe in the possibility of repoliticizing the global world order. Within his train of thought, critical counterforces can at most make an ethical appeal to the global order to better control its excesses – what on closer examination is also the bas ic

1. See 'Utopia and Globalization' in: Lieven De Cauter, *The Capsular Society*, Reflect #3 (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2004), 184-191.

2. We use 'policing' as the translation of the concept of 'la police' that Jacques Rancière defined in detail as a depoliticized form of conducting politics. See Jacques Rancière, *La mésentente* (Paris: Ed. Galilée, 1995).

3. Lieven De Cauter also situates the practice of relative social engineering as resistance in light of the formulation of an 'absolute demand for justice'.

position of the 'global governance' movement.[4] This assumes that the global world order is not infallible, but is capable of regulating its own shortcomings, without external political interference. The assumption is that globalization, in its current, neoliberal form, is an inevitable, quasi-natural process, which at most requires the stipulation of certain ethical (behavioural) codes. A defining feature of these ethical codes is that they are drawn up by the parties involved themselves. Think of the Dutch publicly traded corporations that recently formalized their own behaviour with the famous Tabaksblat Code. Alternative globalization ethicists, like De Cauter, can at most exert pressure to accelerate this natural process of self-regulation.

It is precisely this ultimate naturalization of the global order that needs to be combated. A merely *ethical* counterposition is not sufficient for this purpose.[5] What is needed is a *political* critique of the global world order: the global world order must be stripped of any pretence of naturalness by critically reconstructing its 'socially engineered' character, as well as exposing the last fragments of utopian thinking that lend this order its coherence.[6]

The Social Engineering of Spontaneous Initiatives

A good start for such a project is to expose the superficial character of the 'demonization of social engineering' in today's society. For all that it is taboo these days to speak in terms of social engineering, the philosophy of social engineering is nonetheless being applied on a massive scale. Geographer Erik Swyngedouw rightly points out that, despite what official ideology would suggest, neoliberalism maintains an intimate relationship with state intervention.[7] Not coincidentally, he made this observation in connection with the development of the Zuidas in Amsterdam, a large office, residential and leisure complex currently being

4. This solution to the excesses of globalization in terms of 'better management' is advocated by such figures as Joseph Stiglitz, one of the most famous critics of neoliberal globalization. See Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalisation and its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2003).

5. Because of the ethical slant of De Cauter's position, he can easily be forced into the position of the hysteric or whistleblower who continually challenges the global world order to respond to one failing or another – war yesterday, global warming today, something else tomorrow – without proposing an alternative himself. Even his call to politicize the global world order by creating alternative worlds in its margins is significantly undermined by the way in which De Cauter interprets this resistance (among other things, with general terms such as alternative globalism, the anti-war movement and environmental activism) as well as the idealistic selection of the margin as a field of action.

6. This premise is based on Slavoj Zizek, who argues that a critique lies, first and foremost, in the study of the reproduction of the existing order. See the introduction to *The Indivisible Remainder* (London/New York: Verso Books, 1996).

built in the south of the city. At an official level, the Zuidas is represented as the spontaneous outcome of societal processes: the demand for more office space, trendy residential accommodation and cultural infrastructure, as well as the need for reliable access. The reality, however, is that the Zuidas is part of what the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) calls the 'National Spatial Framework' of the Netherlands: the collection of all the spatial assets that are crucial to the international competitive position of the Netherlands – and which are therefore meticulously managed at the highest planning level: the state.[8] Here we uncover the core of the 'relative social engineering' intrinsic to present-day society in the Netherlands. Dutch society is being socially engineered even today – the Zuidas leaves no doubt as to this fact. It is simply no longer *totally* socially engineered. Instead, the government intervenes only in places that are of strategic importance to particular objectives. It initiates projects for which it delegates both the implementation and the direction, but intervenes in the process at well-considered, strategic moments. It also repeatedly responds to the particular needs and desires of specific target groups and facilitates these as much as possible. This hyperactive role in the National Spatial Framework is compensated by outsourcing the remaining portion of societal organization as much as possible to lower levels of administration (provinces and municipalities) and to the self-regulating capacities of the social field of forces (market partners, societal parties and/or enterprising individuals). A second characteristic of relative social engineering is the dissimulation of state intervention by involving every conceivable stakeholder in the development – economic, societal and cultural players – so that even the Zuidas takes on a quasi-spontaneous character.

At lower levels of scale we run into the same politics of relative social engineering. Every self-respecting city in the Netherlands is now hard at work on generating a creative quantum leap. Municipal authorities are frenetically mapping out creative hotspots, redeveloping sites for creative 'breeding places', designing policy focusing on creative developments, launching promotion campaigns, mobilizing investments in creative sectors, and so on. Here too, in other words, in spite of all the rhetoric to the contrary, we are clearly dealing with social engineering based on a

7. Erik Swyngedouw, 'A New Urbanity? The Ambiguous Politics of Large-Scale Urban Development Projects in European Cities', in: Willem Salet (ed.), *Amsterdam Zuidas. European Space* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2005).
8. See Nota Ruimte. Ruimte voor ontwikkeling ('National Spatial Strategy: Room for Development'), finalized by the Dutch cabinet on 23 April 2004. This illusion is being maintained in the face of all sorts of grave signs to the contrary, such as a major lack of occupancy in the Amsterdam office market, declining interest on the part of market parties, and so on.

more or less clearly formulated ideal vision. Only this is done in a smarter, 'relative' way. Instead of subjecting deprived neighbourhoods to a total makeover, the Dutch government is performing extremely localized precision operations into the social and physical fabric of the city. These interventions are nevertheless linked to grand utopian expectations. Not coincidentally, the parties involved speak of 'gentripuncture' in these cases. In a problem area, like Rotterdam's Spangen district, creative groups are 'injected' in the expectation that their entrepreneurial zeal will restore the countenance of this working-class area to its former glory and spur its residents into action.[9] Just as at the Zuidas, here too we are dealing with a consciously created ambiguity about the true engine of the process of societal change. Even though the so-called gentripunctural interventions would be unthinkable without the massive financial and organizational efforts of the government and even though they are part of well-defined policy programmes based on scientific reports, the operation is nevertheless attributed to the spontaneous entrepreneurial actions of creative actors.

The Perverse Core of Relative Social Engineering

In this we come up against the paradox of the relative social engineering of Dutch society. On the one hand, there is consensus on the fact that social engineering leads to an asphyxiation of the most essential qualities of societal actors: their creativity, entrepreneurship and potential for self-regulation. At the same time, there is agreement that these qualities should be stimulated. This creates the hilarious spectacle of a government that claims to be recusing itself and leaving the societal initiative to bottom-up developments, only to frenetically guide these processes along proper channels and, if they are absent, to generate them. In this the government is fulfilling the same role as the presenter of the popular television programme *Dragons' Den*, in which creative individuals (the pitchers) try to arouse the interest of venture capitalists (the dragons) in order to develop their inventions. The role of the presenter is limited to introducing the pitchers and to laughing or crying along with the pitchers when they discover the market value of their creative proposals. While the initiative to appear before the dragons indubitably lies with the crea-

9. In this we are alluding to, for instance, 'De dichterlijke vrijheid' (poetic licence) – as far as we know one of the first projects to explicitly use the term gentripuncture. This was a project centred on the Wallisblok in Spangen, set up by the Rotterdam Development Corporation in close cooperation with Steunpunt Wonen and Hulshof Architecten. Due to its success, this spontaneous initiative became best practice within the 'Hot Spot Policy' of the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM). In Rotterdam, the project was further developed and refined in the project '169 Klushuizen' (169 houses to fix up).

tive individuals, the presenter, who always stays in the background, represents the vanishing mediator of this ostensibly spontaneous occasion.

Relative social engineering acquires a perverse quality in that societal actors may have more room to give free rein to their creativity, but under the strict condition that they not only be creative, but exploit their creativity in the correct, enterprising way. If they fail to do this, disciplinary sanctions follow. In the process the Dutch government, in the area of cultural policy, is increasingly taking on the guise of the *Dragons' Den* venture capitalists: the financial resources of 'uncreative' breeding grounds are implacably slashed or even cut off entirely, with the resulting available budgets being reinvested in so-called 'points of excellence'. These are top cultural institutions from which a high 'return value' is expected in the area of international allure, economic suitability or societal benefit. This modus operandi represents, within culture policy, the variant of the previously mentioned National Spatial Framework.

This far-reaching government interference in the field of culture in the Netherlands is anything but an isolated case. On the contrary, it is the local version of the philosophy of relative social engineering that prevails on a global scale today. Think, for example, of the way Western powers, in countries like Afghanistan, Iraq or Palestine, are actively creating the right conditions for the facilitation of the innate thirst for democracy of the local populations. When the population misuses its democratic rights and chooses undesirable parties to defend its interests, such as Hamas in Palestine, extreme sanctions follow and the paternalism of the heyday of the socially engineered society makes a grand comeback.

A Different View of the Global World Order Is Possible

The politicization of the global world order, therefore, lies not in an 'ethical critique', but in rendering visible its 'relatively socially engineered' character and hidden paternalism. A unique political moment can consist of the public acknowledgement of this suppressed and obscene truth as well as its integration in its official, post-political self-representation. The challenge is therefore to resist the temptation to immediate postulate an 'alternative globalization'. In the first instance, the global world order demands an alternative historiography – new historiographic myths and monuments – that does justice to the denied socially engineered character of its spontaneous guise.

In concrete terms, we propose the following. In another context Lieven De Cauter, protesting the harsh immigration policy of the European Union, proposed nominating the wall around Ceuta – along with all detention centres for illegal immigrants on the European main-

land – as the culture monument of 1998 (in the context of the Jan Hagel Prize) with as a tag line: 'Observers predict that it will someday become a tourist attraction.'[10] Building on this, we propose nominating the light coercion with which creatives are being sent into 'the dragon's den' in search of microcredits – made necessary by the closure of uncreative 'breeding places' and the concentration of culture budgets in elite creative institutions – as the 'culture moment of 2008'. Without De Cauter's ethical cynicism, however. We are deadly serious. Today the actions of the government within the creative sector might appear as cruel yet necessary. The future will undoubtedly tell whether this disciplinary state intervention will have contributed in an unprecedented way to the making of a new generation of self-sufficient and decisive creative entrepreneurs, who cheerfully let their creativity be tapped for the dream we all share: a strong international competitive position for the Netherlands within the global world order.

10. See footnote 17 to the essay 'The Capsular Civilization' in: De Cauter, *The Capsular Civilization*, op. cit. (note 1), 51-54.

Pascal Gielen

Parallel Reality

A Conversation with Michiel Dehaene, Lieven De Cauter and Rudi Laermans

This past summer, three Belgian intellectuals held a conversation for *Open* about the renewed attention being paid to the 'makeability' of city and society. Moderated by sociologist Pascal Gielen, philosopher Lieven De Cauter, urban designer Michiel Dehaene and sociologist Rudi Laermans discuss such topics as the limits of the socially engineered society and the role of creativity and science in this.

PASCAL GIELEN *Since the advent of postmodernism, the idea of 'makeability' has become discredited, in architecture as well as in philosophy and sociology. Faith in a socially engineered society, after all, is deemed to lead to inhuman, totalitarian regimes, whether they be fascist, Nazi or communist in nature. Postmodernism, however, seems to be quietly fading into the background. We are living in a 'post-post-era'. In this era, it seems not only relativism but also political indifference are being exchanged for a quiet new hope. Small, admittedly modest utopians are being aired again, and with them a longing for an 'alternatively engineered' world. Engagement is once more experiencing a boom in architecture and art, for example. In political philosophy, the narrative of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt has captured worldwide attention. This has also brought renewed attention to the Italian Autonomia movement. This suggests that social engineering can once again be discussed as an idea. The taboo on longing for it, at least, seems to have been lifted. How do you explain this new hope for a socially engineered society?*

RUDI LAERMANS The ideal of social engineering was only jettisoned at the level of society, and at the same time it was re-articulated. It has shifted from the level of society to the level of organizations and the sectors in which they operate. In the process, the discourse of social engineering has been transmuted into that of management and control. This new, postmodern if you will, social engineering discourse was assimilated in a very short time within large transnational enterprises. From these private organizations it then trickled down into the government sphere. Today, education and health care, and therefore hospitals and schools, are 'managed'. The emphasis is placed on flexibility and project-based focus. This is the basic hallmark of postmodern management, which also places the individual at centre stage, and therefore, for instance, the performance of an individual doctor or teacher. The individual is assigned all responsibility and his or her performance is reviewed at least once a year – but within a business usually a lot more frequently. Social engineering is therefore being shifted to a large extent to the individual. The individual has to constantly remake or reinvent himself or herself according to new objectives or projects. I think this diagnosis should be made before we start talking about the social engineering of society again.

MICHIEL DEHAENE Management is social engineering without a social engineering idea. Never before has there been so much control capacity; never before has so much effort been expended to make things. Yet there is no pilot aboard. The credit crisis in the USA is a good example of this: there is a lot of management behind that, but they were on a collision course. Today, faith in social engineering has turned into disaster management.

LIEVEN DE CAUTER The word *maakbaarheid* ('makeability', or social engineering) does not exist outside Dutch-speaking countries. So right off we have a conceptual problem. What is social engineering? Total social engineering is indeed a totalitarian political course, namely the creation of both the society *and* the human being. I think there is a consensus that this can only lead to perverse systems. But you also have what I call 'relative social engineering'. We are indeed engaged in a collision course today. This is not social engineering, however, but total un-social engineering. It is the invisible hand of rogue capitalism that is steering us towards the abyss. Social engineering, on the other hand, is associated with a sovereign. It entails a democratic decision that says, 'we will do this, and we will not do that. This is how we will organize society.' This is how the welfare state was created. That is just about the best thing that humanity has produced in all its history.

RL I think that social engineering, on a political level, has primarily become a question of occasionally significant but sectorally limited interventions, and therefore has indeed left the societal level. Look at European education policy and the Bologna Accord, for instance. Tens of thousands of people were involved in that, to say nothing of the numbers of students. In a matter of a few years, all of higher education was reformed. This demonstrates that things are relatively socially engineerable.

MD Yet we no longer know which political course to choose, and we are faced with problems to which we don't even fathom the beginnings of a solution. We are all, for example, convinced that the problem of global warming exists. But opinions on possible solutions are highly divergent. I'm thinking of the concrete example of the blunder of biofuels. What seemed to be a technological solution now seems to have catastrophic consequences for food prices.

RL At the same time, there is no longer a consensus among the elite about the general food and the basic problems of this world. The USA and China, for example, do not consider the climate issue a priority, in contrast to the European Union.

PG Back to my initial question: where does today's receptivity to social engineering come from?

MD When you look at urban development and at traffic, you see that it's all jammed. If you stick with the same mobility management in operation today, eventually everything will grind to a halt. All the margins have been taken up, and we can still produce some custom-made urban design, but at some point this margin too will be gone. So the demand for energetic interventions and social engineering crops up again. But even if you were convinced that you had reached a point at which a new path should be slashed through the city, as it were, there's a kind of 'path dependency' in operation today, you have to deal with all kinds of historical contingencies and with all the rubbish from the past that seems to preclude such radical interventions a priori. People are absolutely not ready for this.

PG It is therefore because of the spectacle of the ecological catastrophe as a product of a limitless economy that the demand for social engineering is becoming legitimate again.

LDC To keep it in concrete terms: the car is a good example. In this area, there is hyperproduction and hyperconsumerism. Only 2 per cent of Chinese people own a car so far. You shudder to think what will happen when they all want one. We are stuck in a growth logic that will destroy us. The limit of social engineering is the economy that is without limits.

RL On the ecological level, you should have the equivalent of the moral minimum of human rights. There is after all a relative consensus about the fact that a permanent violation of human rights is unacceptable. There must be a similar minimum for ecological rights.

PG Allow me to pose an academic question. What is the difference between attitudes towards social engineering in the 1920s, the 1960s and today?

LDC You can go back even further. Things have always been socially engineered, in the nineteenth century for instance: the hard infrastructure of the nation-state. There was an enormous positivist and technocratic faith in progress and social engineering. This is part of hard modernism across the board, on the political as well as the economic side.

RL The idea that society is not created by God but by man is the proverbial essence of the French Revolution. This became the model for the modern politics of social engineering.

LDC But the 1920s were indeed the age of revolution, both communist and fascist. Labour was its focus. In communism, the worker was elevated to the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the case of fascism, you had a petit-bourgeoisie filled with resentment about the lost war and the economic crisis that experiences a resurgence as a people and a race. What matters is that a philosophy of planning comes to the fore. The 1960s, on the other hand, were reformist and concentrated on free time. With the emphasis on freedom and free time, the economy realized that it was no longer driven by a production capitalism, but by a consumer capitalism. Today everything revolves around communication and information capitalism. You can no longer call this reformist. The most accurate label would be 'post-historic'. Europe is in the post-history of the welfare state. This does not mean that the welfare state no longer exists. Europe has managed to preserve the welfare state, at least continental Europe. Dubai, for example, is truly post-historic. How should we classify it? As theocratic capitalism? In China, on the other hand, you can speak of a postcommunist capitalism, and in America of a rabidly neoliberal capitalism. What matters is that people now realize that consumer capitalism has limits. In the 1960s the new lifestyle encouraged everyone to buy a car, and this is now turning into a nightmare. That too is a post-historic experience. We are experiencing limits, including those of democracy. How should we deal with this? How can we institute the mechanisms of new politics that rearticulate democracy? To me, these are the basic questions when you are discussing social engineering today.

PG And what are the answers?

LDC Back to the nation-state! A dam has to be built against privatization. The state has been robbed on a massive scale: public transport,

telephony, etcetera – in short it sold off all the infrastructures paid for by the taxpayer for a pittance. Nationalization is not a strategy for universal salvation, but at least it is a dam against this.

PG *When you say 'nationalize everything', you are effectively saying 're-politicize everything' too.*

LDC: Of course.

RL In relation to that, let me note that economics are always political economics as well. The European telephony market, for example, is socially engineered. It is actually an illustration of neoliberal *and* transnational social engineering. On the other hand we also see an influential social engineering ideal in the domain of life as such. I'm thinking of life extension or the battle against the aging body. Biology, certainly genetic technology, still adopts a classic social engineering position, linking progress optimism to technological determinism. Now that is biopolitics!

MD Yes, but then you're talking about the sense of social engineering. Because it too has no pilot. People have absolutely no idea what they're doing. They're just messing about and waiting to see what happens.

PG *The Frankenstein syndrome . . .*
But let me pose a somewhat different question. Up to now we've been talking about social engineering as a historical category or a fact of history. But what is it that makes a philosophy of social engineering possible; what is it based on? If I look towards Jacques Rancière and Hannah Arendt, I see art as a base category. Politics is, for instance, the design of a society. That also means you have to be able to design things in your head; you have to dare to fantasize. But even science needs fiction, which is expressed, among other things, in the hypothesis. In that, after all, many possible outcomes are conceived, or to put it a better way, 'imagined' and designed. Isn't fiction necessary to conceive possible realities?

And, if my thesis is correct, are we not today witnessing an expulsion of fiction from the political sphere and from science? Politics today, after all, has turned into policy, or ideological politics into management, but even in science hypothetical thinking is being consumed by blind faith in and an obsession

for methodology. Because thinking about possibilities is being circumscribed, thinking about social engineering is also limited within the boundaries of calculability and feasibility.

LDC: One answer to your first question is in fact also an answer to the question 'what is man?' Man is *ein nicht festgestelltes Tier*, according to philosopher and sociologist Arnold Gehlen, an instinct-forsaken animal. He is a creature of culture. Everything that makes us human is taught to us. If children do not learn to walk, they cannot walk. If they do not learn to speak, they cannot speak. Man is a creature of culture, and culture, from the Latin *colere*, literally means to work, to till. To cultivate is to make.

MD Yes, but how open is man anymore? To me, the total flexibilization of labour, going as far as the expropriation of speech, is the end of this openness, of the human project and of the 'make-able' human being. Because everything is economized, a margin that a system needs to evolve is disappearing. As a scientist you have to continually create this margin in order to think creatively. Today you have to constantly protect yourself, otherwise you get swallowed up in the third money flow. You see this in the creative industry as well. It does not create creativity; on the contrary, it swallows it. Creativity is being fettered, pushed into a standardized format. True creativity does not come out the proverbial 'centres of excellence'; it lies in the periphery.

RL Your question is interesting, but it is two-fold. On the one hand, politics is indeed design, which is an aesthetic category. I call this the pole of the *Bildung*, with as its extreme variant – to paraphrase Boris Groys – the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of the Stalinist state. The opposite pole is politics in relation with aesthetics as a sense of possibility, as the conception of alternatives. Every idea of social engineering presupposes an outside, a fictional space, a parallel reality. We actually know two forms of this. Both religion and art are 'the world in the world', the postulation of another horizon of possibility within the existing one. And perhaps the scientific experiment is the same thing.

LDC Plato's *Republic* outlines a similar parallel reality. This is imagining by creating a concept, a utopia. It can be read as a totalitarian blueprint, but perhaps also as an outline of possibilities, a fiction. Man is no IS creature, but a creature of possibility. Political imagination seems to be swallowed up in the hyperactivity of information tech-

nology and the hypnosis of the display screens. There seems to be no margin for critical distance, for subversion, for imagining other forms of life and society.

RL In very concrete terms, I have always, for example, defended a baseline standpoint when it comes to policy. Reserve 10 per cent of policy for experimental policy. In universities, for instance, try to do something other than uncovering yet another empirical truth. It might lead to nothing, but you might also end up thinking, ten years down the line, 'the model we once tried, which didn't work in this or that condition, now makes sense'.

PG Today we are seeing a rather paradoxical development in connection with creativity. On the one hand you see that – as I just indicated – creativity is being banished from politics and science. On the other hand you see that industry is embracing creativity. Is industry so much smarter?

MD I am not all that surprised that creativity is something you can market. But I am pessimistic about the capacity of the economy to effectively produce creativity. It remains primarily a captation.

RL That is also Antonio Negri's analysis. You can be creative with others, but all creativity is immediately privatized, including in a legal sense. Creativity, including collective creation, immediately becomes property – that's the logic.

PG All three of you are academics. To what extent has academic research supported, legitimized today's politics-without-politics?

MD I am ambivalent about this. The new management regime, as Rudi Laermans calls it, is indeed highly project-centred. From an urbanism point of view I have always been a proponent of this project-based approach. Directive urbanism or 'planism', in which you think in terms of 30 years, are a thing of the past. But the big problem is that project-based urbanism today is in the hands of the project developer. As a result you end up in a logic of perfunctory action. The project manager just has to make sure the project happens. The question of which projects a city needs and why, however, is very seldom posed anymore. What interests me is how a city arrives at particular projects. What are the projects that you cannot leave up to the market and in

which public investment is desirable and necessary? In Flanders, for instance, there is discussion about public-private social housing. This is rather absurd, since social housing in Flanders is aimed at that portion of housing for which there is no market. This means that you can only interest market players in this segment if you guarantee their profits with subsidies. This is only one example of the uncritical use of public resources within a blind faith in project-driven financing. In a more general sense, urbanism, because of its insistence on working project by project, risks being reduced to a lubricant for commercial urban development. I think we are ready for a countermovement.

RL Something similar is happening in the social sciences. There is a highly technocratic orientation, whereby data collection amounts to supplying policy-making authorities, in the broad sense, with information about a national population or specific groups. If one is already working on something socially relevant, one usually keeps to the problem definitions of the political establishment. The whole research industry into immigrant populations is a good example of this. No other category in society is so thoroughly researched these days, although 'surveiled' would be a better word. What bothers me is the attitude of 'as a scientist I'm trying to change the world too'. When in reality the goal is simply to obtain research grants and have research results converted into academic publications. Party politics today works mainly with moral statements: something is bad, or something should be considered bad. The vast majority of sociological research rides along in that narrative. As a result what might also be researched, what might be conceived differently, is curbed.

LDC The task of the intellectual lies in registering resistance. Resistance against privatization, for example the privatization of the university, against management thinking at the university, resistance against the erosion of civil rights and of individual freedom, freedom of opinion, resistance against the dualization of the world and the militarization associated with it, resistance against the ecological destruction of the planet . . . That is the task of an intellectual, and a good academic is an intellectual. But critical academic reflection has always been limited. It can only exist if it is nurtured by a broader resistance movement.

PG *But my question was intended more broadly. Institutions like universities, but public broadcasters as well, always used to leave*

a free, open space that you could occupy. The big institutions, after all, were the ones that scarcely asked questions about what some individuals or small entities do within the institution. It was precisely in these undefined places that creativity and alternative social engineering were often nurtured and other ways of thinking were developed.

LDC These have indeed been 'managed away' today. Everything has been rationalized, so that room for imagination is shrinking. Although I should add some nuance to that: Bologna has also, at least in the art academies, generated a new dynamic.

MD There was indeed what the Belgian sociologist Jean Rémy calls a *seconde réalité*. Within organizational systems, another organization was created simultaneously, and for a number of people who worked within that system, another reality as well. The reality of an academic post today, however, is 'we're on holiday, now we can do some writing'. We can finally do what we essentially consider to be our actual work. But this situation eats up all sorts of other things through which you function, your home life for instance.

RL But critical thinking has also emigrated. Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s critical social theory was mainly influential within the social sciences, for some time now its main habitat has been cultural studies. Moreover, a remarkable number of art academies accommodate (or used to accommodate) alternative thinkers, such as Peter Sloterdijk and Boris Groys.

PG So there are still spaces where one can think about society in a critical way. But how does this relate to actual practice? Does this theorizing actually lead to an alternatively socially engineered society? Take Negri and Hardt's or Virno's concept of the 'multitude'. How do such theoretical, almost virtual concepts relate to reality?

LDC Concepts can feed politics. You have to furnish that imaginary with a critical operationability. But let's be honest: the anti-globalization movement did not need the concept of the 'multitude' to resist the G8. When theory becomes a sort of poetics in which the distinction between theory and practice vanishes, a certain performativity does develop in both thought and action. In inventing a new

discourse, a new reality is also created. Ultimately, however, I expect concrete changes in this area only if citizens, activists and organizations such as NGOs and trade unions, and ultimately political parties as well, join forces. Thinking about politics has to flow through to the political forum.

PG *Let me round things off with a somewhat different question. The social engineering of both man and society was very powerfully expressed by Michel Foucault through the architectural principle of the panopticon. It was the core architecture of the apparatus of discipline from the eighteenth century onward, and therefore the instrument of social engineering as well. What architectural principle would you put forward as the centre of the current management regime?*

LDC The panopticon is fairly unique. It is a philosophical machine to which I can think of no equivalent. What's more, it's actually been built. I would spontaneously answer that the atrium model is at the centre of management. Davos is more or less such a place: a congress centre cum hotel with separate rooms and nouvelle cuisine on the terrace. This is the new locus of power. It is no coincidence that Davos is a spa.

RL The panopticon as a machine is a powerful metaphor because it touches on both the subject and society. Today, however, I would not think of architecture, but of networks. With an example that is an extension of the panopticon: the closed-circuit video that guarantees security and control. And more general circuits of communication, video conferences and Skype. In this way you can extrapolate to the network approach of neurology. Today, after all, we are witnessing a neuropolitics as well.

LDC We are not really going to figure it out. After all, the metaphor of the panopticon was only put forward in the wake of historical facts – when the paradigm became clear, in other words. At the moment we are in the middle of this paradigm. It is therefore difficult for us to classify our situation, let alone sum it up in one metaphorical machine.

book reviews

Hans Boutellier, Ronald van Steden (eds.), *Veiligheid en burgerschap in een netwerksamenleving*

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Patrick Van Calster

The book *Veiligheid en burgerschap in een netwerksamenleving* (Security and citizenship in a network society) ensued from the research programme 'The Security of Citizenship' at the VU (Free University of Amsterdam), where Hans Boutellier holds the Frans Denkers Chair. This book, edited by Boutellier and Ronald van Steden, brings together contributions in which various authors reflect on developments in Western society, based on their particular disciplines. The book is based on the idea that our society is no longer a vertically structured society, but rather should be seen as a horizontal and therefore network society. All the writers agree that these new and often rapid developments call our usual conceptions of social reality into question. After all, we live in an era of unprecedented complexity. Things change faster than our capacity to understand them. Although not all the contributions are equally strong, each text examines what specifically has changed or is in the process of changing. Some contributions provide a historical overview, in which the transition from a stable, orderly society to a fluid society is exposed in an almost tangible way. There are contributions about such topics as victimhood and the perception of insecurity, the relationship between media and security, security in the public space, nodal policing and citizen participation in security projects.

While every contribution examines what precisely has changed or is in the process of changing, and something does this in minute detail, the book (as a collection of all contributions) refuse to engage in the more fundamental debate. In other words, the book stays neatly within the lines of Enlightenment philosophy, which, precisely as a consequence of what the editors call a network society, is now under pressure. As the introductory article indicates, the book seeks out the complex of reasons that underlie the changing role of the state. And it is exactly this insistence on a causality that causes this collection to pretty much fail in realizing its ambitious objective. The book stubbornly clings to the 'safe' conceptual categorizations and certainties of the rational and functional ideas of man and society, so that the sweeping empirical observations remain stuck at the descriptive level and there is virtually no in-depth examination. After all, a radical transition like that being shaped by the network society, but which is also shaping that network society, requires a different way of thinking, that is if we want to comprehend what is happening. A horizontal, complex reality, after all, dispenses with the usual concepts of 'autonomy', 'the individual, 'the group' and 'the social'.[1]

It would therefore have been interesting to explain what epistemological concepts and conceptual frameworks have come under pressure and are probably no longer tenable (at least not for long). The reader would then have been confronted with the boundaries that any discipline has to contend with. The same observation can be made regarding the responses of government and the management of security. In other words, however correct it is to the observation that the world around us is changing, this collection refuses to submit the (scientific) production process to the same observation. As a result it clings to the objective position of the scientist who makes pronouncements as an observer about a reality that is presented as objectively knowable in the

majority of the essays; or to the policymaker and the institution that stand outside the social and societal dynamics, evaluate them, devise projects and prescribe the needed solutions. It is precisely this kind of self-reflection that is lacking in this book, so that it blunders into the pitfalls of modernism.

In the process the book largely ignores what typifies late modernity: the recognition that the subject has lost control. He is, as Michel Maffesoli suggests, a character in a tragedy who, as in the old Greek tragedies, is prey to all sorts of dynamics over which he has no control.[2] According to Maffesoli late-modern society consists of an amalgam of subcultures, which not only absorb and fragment the individual, but upon which the individual also leaves a significant stamp. This is a paradoxical idea of man and society, in which the emphasis is no longer on stability, balance and control, but on instability, movement and transformation: precisely the elements that are expressed in a network society. In late modernity the egocentric paradigm is replaced by a *lococentrism*. After all, it is no longer the individual who determines his life, but the *locus*, the hub at which he finds himself and which he has to a significant extent helped to shape, without being able to exercise control over it. Linear thinking is replaced by non-linear thinking. In concrete terms, this means that Entity A plays a role in the construction of B, which plays a role in the construction of C, which plays a role in the construction of A. There is no design or blueprint for this network. It emerges and maintains itself in existence self-referentially.[3] Social engineering and control are an illusion.

What does this mean in terms of security and citizenship? According to many, Western society has evolved into a risk society, in which risk analyses, prevention strategies and precautionary principles occupy an important place. Social problems are often reinterpreted as security problems and addressed with drastic measures. The perspective of the risk society, however, is a too limited, too narrow and too rational concept. People, after all, are far more flexible and changeable than the concept of the risk society presupposes. The modernist concept (which the risk society is) tends to construct 'criminality', 'risk', 'insecurity', 'society', 'individuals' and 'citizenship' as separate phenomena, ignoring the non-linear interactions out of which the phenomena arise. The focus is then placed on 'the rational', 'the autonomous', 'the functional' and 'the objective'. This implies that individuals can stand outside the social or societal dynamics and control them. This way of thinking results in the public security sector behaving as a cult, whereby the emphasis is on conformity, acquiescence and obedience.[4] Of course I am not denying that individuals can formulate certain insights about the nature of social reality, criminality, security and the like, but these are merely interpretations and actions, which themselves will generate an unremitting stream of responses from others. In order to understand these new developments, we need, as I have argued elsewhere, an interpretive methodology – indeed, *tragic* concepts.[5] This emphasizes the importance of microrelationships and interactions for understanding social reality and the transformative, and goes beyond the cognitive and the autonomous.

Of course this is not the place for me to set up a thesis on security and citizenship in a network society, let alone to expound arguments for it. Boutellier and Van Steden's book, however, invites a response. And that can only be applauded.

1. P. Van Calster, 'Re-visiting Mr. Nice: On Organized Crime as Conversational Interaction', *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 45, 4/5, 2006, 337-359.
2. M. Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes: the Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (London: Sage, 2006).
3. Calster, 'Re-visiting Mr. Nice', op. cit. (note 1).
4. P. Van Calster, 'De publieke Veiligheidssector als cult. Over "prestatie" en "presteren" als cultwaarden in de organisatiecultuur van de publieke veiligheidssector', in: A. Collier and E. Hendrickx (eds.), *De politionele bedrijfscultuur* (Brussels: Politeia, to be published in 2008).
5. Calster, 'Re-visiting Mr. Nice', op. cit. (note 1).

Maria Hlavajova, Jill Winder, Binna Choi (eds.), *On Knowledge Production: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art*

BAK/Revolver, Utrecht/Frankfurt am Main, 2008, ISBN (BAK): 978-90-77288-11-5; ISBN (Revolver): 978-3-86588-466-4, 222 pp., € 20,00

Ilse van Rijn

In the introduction to the publication, the editors of *On Knowledge Production: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art* are quite critical of the contemporary art discourse. Maria Hlavajova, Jill Winder and Binna Choi note a 'intellectualization' of the art field: terms like 'knowledge production', 'artistic research' and 'interdisciplinary practice' have become common parlance without our knowing what they encompass. Moreover, this terminology and its dubious and unknown implications are circulating in lectures, discussions and presentations, which make them even emptier than they already are. Knowledge is merely being displayed and not analysed critically, the editors argue.

The question is whether and in what way *On Knowledge Production: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art* can reflect on the issue it identifies without contributing to it with the same methods. Hlavajova, Winder and Choi are conscious of their paradoxical position. Nevertheless they have collected contributions that are meant to call the status and the concept of knowledge production within contemporary art into question. Questions such as 'What is knowledge?', 'What kind of knowledge are we striving for?' and 'With what methodologies do we approach art and the knowledge it produces?' recur in the articles. The book is a pocket-sized anthology of new and previously published texts. It is the second publication in a 'Critical Readers' series published by Utrecht-based BAK. What distinguishes this reader from the hype in nebulous expressions of knowledge in art?

The collection opens with 'Muhheakantuck – Everything Has a Name', a text by artist Matthew Buckingham. The piece tells the story of a 'forgotten' passage in history: the Dutch conquest of America. We are barely aware of the horrendous murders carried out by the colonialists there. This is an issue of language, Buckingham says. After all, we cannot know what is not described. Moreover, what we have not observed is not recorded. 'It is easy to forget that it is the eye that makes the horizon.'

A detailed bibliography serves to back up the facts included in the text, in fact a transcript of the voice-over for the 2003 film of the same name. On the other hand, the division into short paragraphs employed by the artist here leads the reader to think of his film. The blank lines evoke memories of the images that intervene in the text. Do they conceptually supplement the written words and in so doing redress, despite their visual absence, Buckingham's fictional account? A striking detail is that the same text, when it was previously published in the prestigious academic journal *October*, (Spring 2007, no. 120, 173-181), lacked both the bibliography and the fragmented presentation. Is 'Muhheakantuck – Everything Has a Name' the ideal example of 'artistic research'? Or is it being presented as such? Or does the text, in form as well as content, do what Irit Rogoff, later in the collection, describe not as the task of the artist, but of the theorist: turning over the ground on which we stand, introducing questions and uncertainties where consensus reigns?

The various authors agree that institutions are largely responsible for the almost blind conformity of outlooks in art. A clear example of this omnipresent institutional co-dependence is Copenhagen Free University. This self-declared university, once founded to undermine the knowledge economy that came out of neoliberalism, wanted to subvert institutional power relations. Knowledge is not truth or property, but something ephemeral, something alive: a relationship among people. Knowledge is free. The moment Copenhagen Free University received applications from students and teachers, it had no choice, given the official status it evidently exuded, but to disband. The text in *On Knowledge Production* accompanies the dissolution of CFU and is a statement: We Have Won!

Sven Lütticken is less radical. He is more precise and even subtle in his formulations. The parameters we use in art today are indeed dictated by the neoliberal knowledge economy, not by the discipline of art history. Artistic 'research', consequently, is a parody of instrumentalized academic knowledge. In his text, Lütticken focuses attention on the 'Unknown Knowns', the ideological subconscious in a society, repressed knowledge, the alternative, even dubious knowledge expressed in symptoms that, by definition, are unintentional, uncontrollable and unproductive. He discusses the work of artists such as Arnulf Rainer and Paul Sharits, who consciously concentrate on 'knowledge's other'. But Lütticken also classifies Martha Rosler's *The Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) and Jeff Wall's *Milk* (1984) under what he calls reflexive 'symptomatology'. The author is not particularly interested in celebrating this 'non-knowledge' that escapes the grip of the symbol or the concept. He prefers to use the symptom to discuss technocratic knowledge production, in the process 'revealing' the symbol that only seemingly 'illuminates' and produces knowledge. Be patient and loyal, especially today, towards the symptom – that is Lütticken's motto.

The question is whether 'everything' that art imparts to us can be translated in terms of knowledge. No, reply Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf. Art has its own mode and 'says' more than we actually know about it. A multitude of possible new relationships resonate in art, each of which gives it a new direction. Art can be compared to the dynamic speech act, in which the subject is constituted by the very act of speaking.

No, replies Sarat Maharaj to the same question. A translation is never identical to its original. The 'shadow of the untranslatable' confronts us with what lies beyond the reach of our intellectual capabilities and cannot be approached by means of our regulated systematic knowledge. Referring to Thomas Hirschhorn's Bataille Monument (2002), exhibited in a suburb of Kassel that houses many immigrants, Maharaj argues that today it is vital, now that processes of migration are expanding, to rethink the battlefield of cultural translation, not as something unique and exotic, but as something ordinary and everyday.

Awareness of the other – be it the migrant, the knowledge economy or the formal and discursive trends in art since the twentieth century (in contrast to the current 'retinal' visual culture) – enables us to reflect not so much on what knowledge is (knowledge production, artistic research, interdisciplinarity), but rather on how this comes into being. *On Knowledge Production* aims to stimulate us to explore paths that are more or less radical, but that in any case deviate from what we (are supposed to) know. Acknowledge the limits of your thinking, says Irit Rogoff. 'It is better to do nothing than to work formally toward making visible what the West declares to exist' is how Simon Sheikh, quoting Alain Badiou, concludes his text. He is not specific about how you can be non-productive.

Sheikh's challenging words are also the last in BAK's Critical Reader. Should the institute have kept its mouth shut and not produced the Critical Reader, in order not to fall into the institutional trap that a book in fact represents? *On Knowledge Production* does not aim to provide answers, but to provide a spectrum of conceptual experiments and cautious proposals. Although the writers, in the formulation of their visions, scarcely step beyond the 'obscure' discourse of art, the diversity of art theory texts testifies to the intentions of Hlavajova, Winder and Choi. Awareness of the dominant terminology and its implications is activated 'otherwise' in *On Knowledge Production*. BAK's Critical Reader stimulates debate on this, even if on occasion it comes off as a little forced.

Eric Kluitenberg, *Delusive Spaces: Essays on Culture, Media and Technology*

Institute of Network Cultures/ NAi Uitgevers, Rotterdam 2008, ISBN 9789056626174, € 19,90

Arie Altena

Delusive Spaces contains over 350 pages of articles by Eric Kluitenberg, written from 1994 to 2006. It is an impressive quantity of text, certainly when you consider that in a certain sense it is the by-product of more than ten years of work as an organizer, editor and teacher. Kluitenberg taught at one the first media programmes in the Netherlands (Media-GN in Groningen) and has since been a tireless organizer of events, debates and festivals in the field of media culture, initially often in Eastern Europe and now for several years at De Balie in Amsterdam. In this capacity he combines cultural, technological and sociopolitical themes. It is good that there is now a book that provides insight into the motivations of someone who, with his organizational efforts, is involved in shaping the debate in the Netherlands. It reveals his theoretical basis, it provides backgrounds and it also reveals his personal interests.

The texts in *Delusive Spaces* – which refers to the misleading spaces of the media – come from three 'sources', or, as Kluitenberg himself calls them, three analytical trajectories. First there are fairly long, historically tinged texts that form the 'Archaeologies of the Machine' chapter, in which, for instance, the way civilization was transformed by the establishment of clock time-keeping. In an extension of this, there is speculative media archeology, which examines the dreams new media lead to. There are remarkably frequent references to American technology historian Lewis Mumford, who provides Kluitenberg with a technological philosophy that considers the cultural, the historic and the technological in connection with one another.

The second part consists mainly of articles with a sociopolitical focus. They concern sociopolitical developments associated with the rise of the Internet and are mostly written in the context of one of the net culture events in which Kluitenberg has taken part. They analyse the new situation, call for activism, provide an outline of new forms of politics, identify the problems this produces or extrapolate and make a more controversial proposal. Here, for instance, we find the article about the 'post-governmental condition' that he wrote on the occasion of the last 'Next5Minutes' conference, but also his explanations of hybrid space and the right 'not to be connected' – part of *Open* no. 11, for which Kluitenberg served as guest editor.

Finally there are several essays that, according to Kluitenberg, concern 'the presence of the unrepresentable as an experiential rift in contemporary culture and society'. (page 33) The unrepresentable here is a reference to Lyotard's philosophy of the sublime. Of all the philosophers and theorists examined in *Delusive Spaces*, Lyotard seems to be the one that occupies Kluitenberg the longest. Through Lyotard he attempts to make clear that a place has to be 'outside' – 'outside the media', 'outside the system' – in order for criticism to be possible.

What connects the articles is that they consistently consider culture and technology, society and media, in connection with one another: technology is not just about 'the calculable and predictable'. (page 69) In the introduction – the most recent text – Kluitenberg argues that theorists have to open the black box of technology. He emphasizes the necessity of hardware and software studies – a plea with which I wholeheartedly concur. In practice, in the older articles, he is still mostly opening the cultural black box: in the technocultural and the cultural-technological it is always culture that gets the attention.

A second thread is the emphasis on the link between the digital media space and non-digital reality. For this he develops the concept of hybrid space, which combines the flow of spaces or the space of flows. This is why he insists on an activist use of new media that is not limited to cyberspace.

The texts offer a retrospective of the evolution of the 'media discourse' over the last ten years. From the pre-World Wide Web days to the activist age of tactical media (when the Internet seemed to be turn-

ing into an alternative space to 'the media'), to the current culture of always-having-to-be-connected and its dark side: the total data mining and continuous real-time tracking of data bodies and products as well as human bodies. In this regard *Delusive Spaces* also traces the transition from mass-media spectacle society in which power can be exercised through visibility in the media to a society in which everything is de facto visible and traceable. In this world, says Kluitenberg, 'Power is vested . . . not in the ability to connect and become visible, but in the ability to disconnect, to become invisible and untraceable, at will.' (page 287) This is why Kluitenberg asserts that we have to defend the right not to be connected: as a form of resistance, in order to create a place from which criticism is possible.

While Kluitenberg's concept of hybrid space is probably the most interesting, the right not to be connected provides the most food for thought. Yet I still find his article 'Media Without an Audience' the most appealing. It relies heavily on a long quotation from Adilkno's theory of sovereign media, and it owes its method to Adilkno as well. When it was written in 2000, it made an issue of an avant-garde idea; it has since become an uncanny description of a media reality, in which everyone is a broadcaster and, if you're lucky, only a few friends are still tuned in. Messages are no longer being sent out into the world; there is only an attempt to make contact. Or, as he says himself in 'The Pleasure of the Medium', 'Self-mediation does not aim at communicating – at conveying a message – instead it tries to establish affective relationships.' (page 283) He views this as an anthropological principle: it is an attempt to feel at home in an environment that is not naturally ours. It is passages like these, in which Kluitenberg encapsulates the apparent paradoxes of our media society in words, that make this collection worthwhile. The fact that the book also contains a lot of familiar work, perhaps too many summations of other people's insights, and that as whole it is uneven, is something you're happy to forgive.

Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme (eds), *World Art Studies. Exploring Concepts and Approaches*

Uitgeverij Valiz, Amsterdam, ISBN 978-90-78088-22-06, 480 pp., € 29,50

Özkan Gölpinar

It takes guts to put together a book about World Art Studies and to ask professor emeritus John Onians, the specialist in the domain of World Art Studies and the editor of the first Atlas of World Art, to serve as a reference during the first presentation. You run the risk of your search being compared to the voyage Columbus undertook to discover the New World.

The publication *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, edited by Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme, both affiliated with Leiden University, focuses on the 'broad' question of: how (contemporary) art reflects processes of interculturalization, how it interrogates them and calls them into question. The authors also looked for new interdisciplinary frameworks and concepts to better understand and situate this new art production.

According to Zijlmans and Van Damme, (Western) art history must take up the challenge of incorporating as many different perspectives as possible, with the aim of making a new intercultural discussion possible. This is why the book contains not only contributions by art historians but also by anthropologists, archeologists, geographers, evolutionary biologists and neuroscientists.

This call should be seen as a courageous attempt to counter stagnation within the artistic and scientific elite of the Netherlands in their assessment of non-Western art. A challenge that seems to have been enthusiastically taken up in many parts of the Dutch art world in the last few years, given the multitude of debates and discussions on the subject.

A not unimportant motivation for these, incidentally, is a well-understood self-interest. The (subsidized) art world is increasingly facing issues of a political or social nature. In addition, works by artists from all over the world, to which a single predicate is seldom applicable, are increasingly exhibited. The sometimes old-fashioned institutions are also looking for a new audience, because their existing audience is aging.

In practice, art deals with ethnically specific expressions of culture, all sorts of forms of fusion, multiple identities, dual cultures and subcultures. The fact that, from this perspective, it is suddenly no longer very clear what 'Western culture' actually is does nothing to simply things. The growing awareness that all sorts of Western art forms exist by the grace of non-Western influences incorporated by the West over time also contributes to this uncertainty. History is conveniently forgotten, dismissed as a primitive, exotic source of inspiration for 'real' art; the reproach that applying Western standards to non-Western art forms can lead to irrelevant judgments and exclusion is expressed more and more often. The basis of this is the cultural and philosophical debate between 'relativists' and 'universalists'. Whereas universalists assume there is a quality, identifiable worldwide, that transcends cultural differences, relativists believe that each art form should be judged by its own, culturally determined standards of quality.

The various writers in this publication have made every effort to present a candid, sometimes entertaining, but always persuasive argument for a more global vision of Western art history. Philosophy professor Ben-Ami Scharfstein of Tel Aviv University, for instance, addresses the cultural and philosophical debate between the relativists and the universalists. It is better not to speak of 'Chinese', 'Indian' or 'Western' art traditions or cultures but instead of the visual uniqueness of individual artists. 'What does an ancient Greek potter or pottery painter have to do with a Byzantine painter of icons, a baroque sculptor or painter, a French Impressionist, a German Expressionist, or, to name names, a Jackson Pollock or a Duchamp; or for that matter, what have any of these to do with any of the others?' Scharfstein argues, 'In India, what does the guild craftsman, with his prescribed procedures and low social status, have to do with the Sanskrit poets and dramatist who both reflected an created the aesthetic doctrines of upper-class appreciation of art, or what have any of these to do with the Mughal miniaturist, who worked at the pleasure of their Muslim employers? In China, the literati, who wrote poetry and practiced calligraphy and painting learned to look down not only on the potter, however expert, but also on the professional painter, who committed the spiritual sin of painting for the sake of money and the lesser but still considerable sin of excessive decorativeness and ostentatious virtuosity.'

One disadvantage of the separate contributions is that the reader is sometimes left with more questions than answers. In her contribution, researcher Jean M. Borgatti of Clarks University in Massachusetts addresses the images that different cultures have of one another and their 'representation' of one another. In the last 500 years, Europeans have often characterized objects from China, Japan and India as exotic, fetishes, or as 'archetypes'. Only in the mid-twentieth century did these objects move from historical museums to art museums. 'Rather than bringing understanding, recognition as art merely extended the projection of European fantasies upon these objects,' says Borgatti. For instance, during the colonial era, it was assumed that these traditional works of art were relics of primitive superstitions. This idea is so dominant that well-educated African artists still find it difficult to refer to African traditions in their work.

In her conclusion Borgatti writes that 'it is not without irony that a principle long established in many parts of the World underlies the new paradigm forming for Western portraiture – that the power of the image depends upon its being unseen'. But what does she mean by this? Were we in the West too late in recognizing the power of other cultures and artistic expressions? And what should we do differently?

The book contains more such ideas, set down on paper without a clear conclusion. They join the mishmash of divergent ideas and approaches that already exist in relation to the discussion about the existence or non-existence of Western and non-Western art forms.

In her previous essay 'Het kunstwerk en zijn tijd'(The artwork and its time), Zijlmans wrote, 'Facts lie in the past, but they come down to us *just like that*. They are always mediated; there is always a context in which the fact is imbedded, a context of research, objective definition, question formulation, method used, vision. The artwork may be a historical fact as an artefact, but there are many ways of reading it, interpreting it and *framing* it. The interpretation of a work depends to a large extend on the interpreter, on "*the individual doing the reading*".'[1]

We are therefore being asked to look at art in a different way and to look at ourselves in a different way. In the process we are constantly working on giving ourselves a direction.

These critical reservations notwithstanding, *World Art Studies* is a mature contribution towards opening the dialogue with other scientific domains without the pretension of having one unequivocal answer. It is to Zijlmans and Van Damme's credit that they want to participate in a highly topical discussion in this way.

1. Kitty Zijlmans, 'Het kunstwerk en zijn tijd', *Leidschrift*, historical journal, volume 17, 17-03.