Cahier over kunst en het publieke domein

open

Vrijheid van Cultuur

Regulering en privatisering van intellectueel eigendom en openbare ruimte

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Editorial

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FREEDOM OF CULTURE

The Regulation and Privatization of Intellectual Property and Public Domain

Recent years have seen a politicization of the 'common' in the public domain. This intensification of the debate stems from a growing number of conflicts between public and private with respect to the ownership and control of knowledge and culture. 'Freedom of culture' has become a pressing issue with both legal and ethical ramifications: it concerns the extent to which culture and knowledge can be freely distributed, exchanged or appropriated, and the guarantee of places where the 'commons' can manifest themselves and be discussed.

The expansion of restrictive legislation relating to copyright and intellectual property, as well as the increasingly inaccessible technical architecture of the Internet, the source codes, are jointly responsible for the rise of movements or initiatives such as Free Software, Open Source, Libre Commons, Copyleft, Free Culture and Creative Commons, projects which differ widely with regard to politics, philosophy and chosen strategy, but which all interpret 'free' as 'free as in free speech, not free beer'. The activists in particular are concerned not merely with fighting copyrights or creating alternative licences and free spaces, but with realizing a social vision. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, for example, argue in their writings about power and the masses in an era of globalization, for an 'an open-source society, that is, a society whose source code is revealed so that we can all work collaboratively to solve its bugs and create new, better social programmes'.

Concepts like originality, authorship and ownership were already being explored in art and philosophy in the 1970s and '80s, at which time 'appropriation' became an explicit figure of speech. Compared with the massive scale on which culture is being appropriated and exchanged today, due in no small part to digitization, this now looks more like a symbolic, intellectual and elitist affair, more like an artistic project than a social strategy. But the flip side of today's 'free culture' is a growing measure of regulation and control in which some people discern the contours of a 'permission culture'. At the same time, there is a growing tendency to outsource elements of public culture to private parties (patrons, corporations

and the like) who are then able to co-determine what will be released or made publicly accessible and what not.

Open 12 examines the consequences of these developments for the 'free' realization and exchange of culture, the dynamism of art and the balance of power in the public domain and urban space. It looks at new restrictions but also at new possibilities. The emphasis is on questions surrounding the privatization of intellectual property on the one hand, and on public space as creative practice on the other.

Stephen Wright ponders what the growing privatization of knowledge means for art as a form of knowledge. Brian Holmes also looks at the privatization of knowledge, but in relation to the collective, technologically determined space in which language and communication acquire meaning. McKenzie Wark, author of *A Hacker Manifesto* and *Gamer Theory*, describes the adventure of publishing his books in light of his own theory. Joost Smiers criticizes the current copyright system and leading alternatives like General Public License and Creative Commons. He puts forward an alternative proposal for returning 'to the commons what has always belonged to it'. Willem van Weelden questions the effectiveness of the activist credo of 'becoming minor' in relation to Net criticism of Lawrence Lessig and Creative Commons.

In 'Artistic Freedom and Globalization', Pascal Gielen seeks to return art to a role that encourages reflection and argues for the creation of a free zone that would entail accepting globalization in all its complexity. Maxine Kopsa interviews British artist Chris Evans about his project *Militant Bourgeois: An Existential Retreat*, which focuses on the area of tension between patronage (in particular the increasingly criticized Dutch system of government grants) and the contemporary production of art. In his column, Arjen Mulder states that 'an artist doesn't live on in his oeuvre, but in his fakes'.

Architect Dennis Kaspori collaborated with Jeanne van Heeswijk on a supplement entitled 'Guest ≠ Welcome' in which they react to the discourse of segregation in urban space with new models for care and hospitality aimed at developing a better understanding of the fragile situation in which the residents of the so-called *Zones Urbaines Sensibles* find themselves, and at devising more inclusive forms of urbanity. They invited a number of international firms and initiatives to present a vision based on their own practice.

Swop Network's contribution, 'Give Away in Circulation', challenges the notion of intellectual property, while artist Oliver Ressler gives a special presentation of his project *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies*.

Stephen Wright

Digging in the Epistemic Commons

Using the ideas of Gabriel Tarde, Ludwig Wittgenstein and George Herbert Mead, writer and critic Stephan Wright reflects on the question of how, in a capitalist knowledge economy, to prevent intellectual property from being commodified and knowledge from becoming increasingly privatized.

The gentrye are all round, on each side they are found,
Theire wisdom's so profound, to cheat us of our ground
Stand up now, Diggers all.
The Diggers' Song, Gerrard Winstanley and Leon Rosselson[1]

1. See http://www.diggers.org/english_diggers.htm#leve.

It is a perplexing anomaly of human anatomy that our ears are not equipped with shutters or lids of some description. We simply close our eyes and the visual field disappears, whereas we have to plug our ears with some makeshift stopper – like fingers – if we want to block out the ambient sound. This has contributed to the extraordinary epistemological privileges enjoyed by sight over the other senses, but also underscores the fact that we are in sound like fish in water. We are immersed in aural experience, which, on the basis of social and cultural criteria, we classify as noise, music, discourse and so on. However, we cannot but perceive sound and we often find ourselves humming a tune we didn't even know we were hearing in the mall, repeating an accent we heard in the street, an expression picked up on the car radio, a word overheard in the subway. Indeed, that is precisely how we learn foreign languages, just as it was how we learned our native language: by imitating what was out there, in a double and inseparable process of individuation and socialization. Sound is not 'out there' in the public sphere; we are in sound, and in the absence of 'earlids' to demarcate the threshold between the public and the private, it seems reasonable to assume that what we *hear* is the basic material of all our sonic creations, from discourse to music.

But what if those sounds were somebody's private property? What if we had to hear them, but weren't allowed to play with them without paying user's fees? Wouldn't that be the end of folk music, a form of music based on reusing lyrics and music from previous works, incorporating it into new arrangements in keeping with changing contexts? Wouldn't that be the end of sound-based creation in general, inasmuch as it is about reacting to one's environment? In recent years, copyright law, and the assumptions about cultural ownership that inform it, have clamped down dramatically on the sonic 'commons'. Consider two symptomatic cases. In 1992, Island Records (the famous reggae label, ironically enough) in an example-making lawsuit, sued the group Negativland for enormous sums of money on behalf of the band U2, for using fragments of a U2 song in one of their songs. In the name of protecting U2's creative property, Negativland was driven to the verge of bankruptcy – making them into the extraordinary advocates of the creative commons, which they have subsequently become.[2] A still more telling point is made by Public Enemy's Chuck D about how copyright law has utterly changed the way the group and other hip-hop artists make their music. In 1988, Public Enemy released *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, by any account one of the most innovative-

2. See their impromptu interview with U2 frontman The Edge on their website http://www.negativland.com/edge.html.

Public Enemy, *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, 1988

sounding albums ever. It sounded like nothing before it – it was frontloaded with sirens and squeals and squawks that merely augmented the collaged backing tracks – which is ironic given that what they were rapping to was entirely composed from samples of what had been heard before. As Chuck D puts it, 'sampling basically comes from the fact that rap music is not music. It's rap over music.' Rappers would take the sounds from their saturated media environment and, with the help of emerging sampling technologies, rap over it. The group got a lot of attention for rapping about black nationalism but the piece 'Caught, Can I Get a Witness' deals directly with the looming 'criminalization' of digital sampling: 'Caught, now in court 'cause I stole a beat / This is a sampling sport / Mail from the courts and jail / Claims I stole the beats that I rail . . . I found this mineral that I call a beat / I paid zero.' Chuck D argues that today it would be virtually impossible – or at least mind-bogglingly expensive – to make a record like *It Takes a Nation*, with its hundreds of samples, because by 1991, no one 'paid zero' for the sounds they sampled – they paid a lot. Yet that album changed significantly how we hear music. 'Corporations eventually found that hip-hop music was viable. It sold albums, which was the bread and butter of corporations. Since the corporations owned all the sounds, their lawyers began to search out people who illegally infringed upon their records.'[3] What, in the history of ideas, are the philosophical underpinnings and origins of the 'ownership' of sounds, ideas and other inventions? And what forms of historical opposition has it encountered?

3. Kembrew McLeod, 'How Copyright Law Changed Hip Hop. An Interview with Public Enemy's Chuck D and Hank Shocklee', http://www.stayfreemagazine.org/archives/20/public_enemy.html.

The Invention to End All Invention

It was the mercantile Venetians who came up with the idea of patenting inventions. In 1469, the Venetian Republic granted one of Gutenberg's assistants, to the exclusion of any other person, the privilege of making and operating a printing system using movable characters. The patent was bestowed for the term of his natural life, which, rather fortunately for print culture, turned out to be short. But as Pierre Papon observed, 'one can only imagine Europe's cultural backwardness if Gutenberg himself had sought to patent his invention.'[4] The notion of laying claim to the ownership of an invention has today become so widespread and self-evident that we may at first fail to appreciate just how staggering an innovation the patent system was in the history of private property. From today's perspective – faced as we are with literally *everything*, material and immaterial, becoming private property – it may appear to be just another logical step in an ongoing commercial process. Yet, it is no exaggeration to say that the innovation of the patent system was of an ontological order: though seemingly directed at the invention's objecthood (this machine, in this studio) what it really withheld from the public

4. Pierre Papon, *Le Temps des ruptures* (Paris: Fayard, 2004).

domain was the know-how required to build another one like it. It explicitly protected the brainchild by implicitly privatizing the brainpower. If only in incipient form, it made knowledge a commodity like any other. Or to put it differently, while seemingly laying claim to an external machine, it opened the way to the privatization of an internal machine, generically described today as intellectual property. There is some irony in the fact that the first invention to be patented was one whose purpose was so bound up with knowledge production on a mass scale.

Prior to the Venetians, tools like printing presses could have owners. But the knowledge needed to build them and operate them could no more be exclusively owned than the alphabets and the arrangements of letters and words which they were used to print. Whole realms of life eluded exclusive ownership. It would be anachronistic to say that these domains were held in common, though it is tempting to do so in light of the colossal expansion of private property over the past several centuries – through patents, copyrights and other legal instruments. To have said so at the time would have sounded as tautological as to say that the air we breathe, or the words we speak, are held in common, though of course today those domains too are prey to capitalism's structural imperative for permanent expansion. From the perspective of capitalist accumulation, the patent system opened up a territory as vast as that of the New World, to which Europe would lay title several decades later; indeed one which is potentially vaster, for if horizontal – that is, geographical – expansion has attained global limits, there is no end yet in sight to the vertical expansion in the realms of knowledge.

The realization that the patent system was less about objecthood than about harnessing the subjectivity behind it only emerged over a long period of time. But what intellectual property rights seek to codify gives some sense of the ontological paradigm shift implicit in the very idea of patents:

'It had never been imagined that someone could, all alone, wrest from within himself a value that was not a thing. It had never been imagined that there existed a form of property that was not only immaterial but also inherent in the subject. It had never been imagined, for instance, that books were something other than tangible, material goods, which an author would yield to a bookseller who would, himself, sell them. Copyright was born of an unheard-of effort to wrest creation from the world of things, to make a value of the actual subject, thereby solving the squaring of the circle: although a work is not an object of property like another, it nevertheless belongs to its author who can exploit it.'[5]

5. Bernard Edelman, *L'Adieu aux arts* (Paris: Aubier, 2001), 70.

Whatever else might be said about the patent system, it was indeed an extraordinary *invention* – every bit as historically consequential as any of the countless inventions to which it has been applied. However, its extraordi-

nary success is due to its *imitation* by legislative bodies around the world. After all, if other powers had not imitated Venice's invention, it would have had very little effect. This is an obvious but highly significant point, because invention is usually opposed to imitation. It certainly is in patent law. Imitation and invention stand opposed the way individuality is thought to stand opposed to sociality – though both these oppositions are fallacious, as I shall argue. For what is extraordinary is that the phenomenal success of patents (or any other invention) can only be explained by the imitation of the initial logic – sole ownership not merely of an object and its use, in this case, but of the knowledge and know-how necessary to produce that object and use it – and its application today to literally every field of knowledge production. The success of any invention – even the invention to end all invention, which is how one might describe the progressive emergence of the privatization of knowledge – depends on imitation if it is to endure over time. To better understand this relationship between invention and imitation, it is useful to consider the philosophy of Gabriel Tarde.

The Powers of Imitation

'Desubjectivizing the powers of the mind to reach the level of impersonal psychological forces, to reach the level of experience prior to any separation between object and subject, between the sensible and the intelligible: such is the fundamental operation of Tarde's philosophy,' writes Maurizio Lazzarato in a book which has been invaluable in rejuvenating the thinking of one of the founding figures of French sociology, whose work lay forgotten for nearly a century.[6] Tarde's thought is founded on a strange dialectic of inventiveness and imitation. Typically, inventiveness is venerated as an expression of triumphant individual authorship whereas imitation is deprecated as mere copying; but instead of hierarchizing and opposing invention and imitation, Tarde saw them as the mutually reinforcing dynamics of any process of innovation. The social group, he wrote, is 'any collection of beings who are in the throes of imitating one another or, without actually imitating one another at the moment, resemble one another such that their common traits are old copies of the same model.'[7] Tarde refused to distinguish between conscious and unconscious imitation (habitus, accent, etcetera), arguing they were part of a single process. Indeed, imitation can take place at great distance – it is an expanding field, where groups and individuals imitate one another without any need for proximity in space and time, and most often without being aware of it. But imitation is not merely the manifestation of a social bond, it is the veritable engine of the spread of invention, and the reason that innovation – in art, in knowledge production, and so forth – is always collective and never 'private.'

6. Maurizio Lazzarato, *Puissances de l'invention* (Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2002), 128.

7. Gabriel Tarde, *Les Lois de l'imitation* (Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2001), 128.

Imitation is the movement through which something is repeated and spreads. But it is at the same time the movement through which, in spreading and being repeated, it is differentiated both qualitatively and quantitatively. As it spreads, it is shared; imitation ceases to be unilateral and becomes reciprocal. There is nothing homogeneous or homogenizing about imitation, for the effect of its spreading is that, even as it generates imitative series, it multiplies the likelihood of their intersecting with one another, inventing other new objects, which themselves will generate new clusters of series. This differentiating process, paradoxically inherent to imitation, is precisely what Tarde refers to as *invention*. 'An invention is, after all, merely the effect of a singular intersection of heterogeneous imitations':[8] it is the moment where two series of imitations come together in a nexus characterized by an utterly new combination. So if invention can be defined as the product of imitation, they are both integral parts of a process of differentiation. But Tarde goes further, arguing that *an invention which is not imitated simply does not exist socially*.[9] Imitation is thus the framework from which, through incremental shifts, invention emerges. And in order for an invention to be imitated, it has to capture the attention of other minds, engage with them, release their desires, their beliefs, memories and hopes through a process of social communication. The inventor deprives no one of anything, quite the contrary; and the imitator appropriates what he or she copies without dispossessing anyone else.

8. Ibid., 152.

9. 'An invention which is not distributed, which is not imitated, has no value whatsoever.' Lazzarato, op. cit. (note 6), 42.

It is on the basis of this dialectic of invention and imitation that Tarde's theory of society, based upon what he calls 'intercerebral co-operation', can be appreciated. In opposition to the tenants of political economy, Tarde held that it is the co-operation between minds and its product, knowledge, which is at the very core of the productive process – and at the origin of the production of value. 'Tarde's surprising relevancy today,' writes Maurizio Lazzarato, 'lies in the fact that he identified the production of knowledge as a specific trait of modernity. . . . In making the production of knowledge the true production of modern society, he asserted the autonomy, the independence and the constitutive power of assembled minds and not the primacy of intellectual over manual labour.'[10] This concept of knowledge production is only imaginable if productivity is defined through the association of powers of invention and imitation, replacing the opposition between forces with *co-operation*. Whereas the social sciences tend to define human action negatively, as based upon lack, absence, suffering, Tarde pointed to the intersubjective pleasure inherent in collective action. Tarde's concept has sweeping consequences for collective knowledge production. As Lazzarato explains:

10. Ibid., 22; 19.

'Knowledge escapes the logic of rarity and economic measure for two basic reasons. Firstly, it is the production of a form of co-operation which is inde-

pendent and autonomous from the division of labour. Collective linguistic patterns, communities of scholars, and of the sensitive, as well as public opinion result ontologically and historically from the action of assembled brains and not from the socialization of business and the market. Language, art, science, public opinion and affects all presuppose a common agency, which cannot be described by the logic of material production, as well as a form of co-ordination, which cannot be reduced to the market. Language, art, science, public opinion, affects are collective goods, indivisible and infinite, and consequently their measure can only be determined within the immanence of a collective agency, which, as we know, breaks down the alternative between the individual and the collective.'[11]

11. Ibid., 149.

Thus for Tarde, knowledge production – including, explicitly, art production – is a collective endeavour. Any consumption of knowledge is, at one and the same time, production of new knowledge – an agreeably growth-yielding dialectic. Knowledge, Tarde believed rather optimistically, could never be reduced to a commodity and appropriated for the sole use of some owner. 'It can, rigorously speaking, be neither lent nor exchanged, since whoever possesses it does not give it up by communicating it to someone else. There is an act of emanation, and not alienation. It cannot be given, nor can it be stolen, for the same reason.'[12]

12. Gabriel Tarde, *Psychologie économique* (Paris: Le Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2002), 379.

But how does this sit with the proliferating privatization of knowledge? What could possibly prevent the exclusive appropriation of intellectual property in a knowledge-based capitalist economy? Tarde's answer is simple: 'Basically, because that would imply the non-existence of an essential function of our mind: memory.'[13] On the social level, memory functions as a synonym of imitation. In other words, teaching someone something – disseminating knowledge – by no means requires that one forget or relinquish anything one knows, in order to concede it to the other party, as is the case in the exchange of commodities. Not only is memory not alienated in its various embodiments (books, films, exhibitions, but also in concepts and so on), but it musters them to augment its powers of differentiation. Once the genie is out of the bottle, there is no putting it back in. This simple argument is appealing because it underscores the ontological difference between knowledge objectified in a product and knowledge-production as an inherently collective and expanding process based on invention and imitation.

13. Ibid., 292.

Tarde's confident assertions notwithstanding, it is difficult to see what could stop capitalism, impelled by the need for accumulation, from imposing an objective mode of co-ordination (market), regulation (intellectual property law) and organization (based on private property), and privatizing all new configurations of language, perhaps even neologisms, source codes for software, and so on, despite their co-operative makeup. Not in order to

withhold them from public use, but on the contrary, to generate income from their use: to rent out knowledge, perhaps even words, on a pay-per-use basis. There is an interesting ongoing legal battle in Germany involving an online knowledge-production initiative, known as textz.com. As the collective's rather Tardian motto suggests – 'We are the & in Copy & Paste' – its purpose is to make freely available, in the common space of the Internet, texts of philosophical and literary interest, including the works of Kafka, Benjamin and Adorno. The group explicitly invites any like-minded people ('all you need is a $50 scanner') to imitate their example. In keeping with the reasoning that disseminating knowledge deprives no one else of it, the collective posted two texts by Adorno – an act for which they were served notice by a bailiff that the Hamburg Foundation for the Advancement of Science and Culture was suing them for copyright infringement, and had obtained a preliminary injunction against them for 'damages' incurred through their illegally distributing works over which it held copyright. The law in this case is unambiguous: textz.com is in the wrong, and must either pay up or see its legal titleholder face a sentence of up to two years in jail. The open letter addressed to the Foundation's director is worth quoting at some length – quite in keeping with the spirit of textz.com – because it is a strong statement of epistemic sovereignty in the face of legal fiction:

> Threatening jail time for copying Adorno: that's where you have crossed the line that separates ordinary copyright cases from extraordinary tales of copyright madness. . . . As 'intellectual proprietor' of Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, you should be aware of the power that still emanates from their works: a negative, dialectical, weak and historical power that stretches far beyond the reach of any court of law, and that is impossible to contain in any of your archives. 'Intellectually', Adorno and Benjamin will always escape becoming commodities, and their works, even in the form of the private property they have become, have a peculiar tendency to vanish the very moment you try to get hold of them.
>
> The question of 'intellectual property' is not about whether the producers of creative works should be denied their right to material reproduction through their creative work. . . . The question of 'intellectual property' is about when it will finally be acknowledged that people have a universal right to the reappropriation of the means of production, that creative works – however privatized and commodified they may have become – are such a means of production, and their reproduction is a fundamental and fully legitimate form of knowledge production itself.

> Even confronted with . . . the state of permanent emergency and institutionalized panic that is the 'war against piracy', people have never ceased to copy, paste, modify, save, upload, download, print and share digital data. In the case of 'intellectual property', the power of the factual exceeds by far the power of the law. People are perfectly aware of the historical fact that no law is ever just given. Law is created though factual struggle, and is eroded through factual struggle. Thus, the critique of 'intellectual property' cannot remain individual, sporadic and theoretical – it has to become swarming, massively parallel and practical.
>
> We are glad to announce that, effective today, every single work by Adorno and Benjamin that you claim as your 'intellectual property' has become part of the very public domain that had granted you these copyrights in the first place. Of course they will not be available instantly, and of course we will not publish them ourselves – but you can take our word that they will be out, in countless locations and formats, and that not even a legion of lawyers will manage to get them back.[14]

14. http://textz.com/adorno/open_letter.txt. The full statement is available on the group's website – as are, of course, all the other texts which they have thoughtfully put there. The interview published by the *Tageszeitung* with the Institute's director is a bracing example of elitist betrayal of enlightenment values. http://www.taz.de/pt/2004/03/04/a0172.nf/text.

Diggers All!

Though comparatively less serious than other legal battles around intellectual property (such as the WTO's insane demand that India conform to international law and pass legislation curtailing the production and export of affordable anti-retroviral drugs used to treat HIV), this issue is of interest because of its symbolic importance involving the works of the leading figure of the Frankfurt School. The issue is not about politicizing knowledge but about producing the political as knowledge. There are many examples of this kind, but among their common historical and intellectual antecedents is a somewhat forgotten moment in radical political history – one which was fundamental to the genealogy of all libertarian thought and practice with an emphasis on egalitarianism – that is, those movements in seventeenth-century England, at the time of the English revolution, ruthlessly crushed by Cromwell, but whose reputation has never ceased to inspire radicals, not least of all because of the groups' action-provoking names: the Levellers and the Diggers. The Levellers were formed first as a mass movement of anti-enclosure activists, generally acknowledged to be the first political group organized on principles of democratic self-government. The Diggers emerged several years later, calling themselves the 'True Levellers', their key demand being the 'free allowance to dig and labour the Commons'. Declaring the earth 'a common treasury', their spokesman, Gerrard Winstanley went further than the Levellers had dared, writing up a

practical manifesto entitled *The True Levellers' Standard Advanced*. What gave the movement popular momentum was the widespread rural poverty and dispossession, as the gentry shored up its power and regulated land use by erecting enclosures on what had hitherto been common land. As Winstanley put it:

> The earth was not made purposely for you, to be Lords of it, and we to be your Slaves, Servants, and Beggars; but it was made to be a common Livelihood to all, without respect of persons: And that your buying and selling of Land, and the Fruits of it, one to another, is The Cursed thing, and was brought in by War . . .[15]

15. The manifesto, and other Digger pamphlets by Winstanley, are available online: http://www.tlio.demon.co.uk/diggers.htm#True.

In 1649, forty or so Diggers and their families occupied a small area of common land at St. George's Hill, Surrey, and began to dig and cultivate it with vegetables. Their numbers more than doubled over the course of the year, but their activities did not go unnoticed by the local gentry, rival claimants to the common lands, who notified the Council of State that the Diggers 'had invited all to come in and help them, and promise them meat, drink, and clothes', and that the Diggers claimed that their number would be several thousand within ten days. 'It is feared they have some design in mind.' Indeed they had, though it was not to materialize. The Council of State explained the situation to Lord Fairfax, lord general of the army, along with a dispatch stating:

> By the narrative enclosed your Lordship will be informed of what hath been made to this Council of a disorderly and tumultuous sort of people assembling themselves together not far from Oatlands, at a place called St. George's Hill; and although the pretence of their being there by them avowed may seem very ridiculous, *yet that conflux of people may be a beginning whence things of a great and more dangerous consequence may grow*.

Hectored by legal action and violence, by 1650 the Digger colony was dispersed – but like all socially useful inventions, it has been the object of ongoing, differentiating imitation. The movement was historically significant because it was the contemporaneous counterpoint to the possessive individualism as expressed in the political liberalism of Hobbes and Locke. And of course today, the Diggers' insistence on reclaiming the Commons has particularly acute relevance as initiatives such as the Creative Commons, CopyLeft dig in the knowledge commons. In researching this essay, I came across an artist collective called 'Nomoola', based in Hawaii, that among other projects, carried out an explicitly Digger-inspired initiative called 'Eating in Public'.[16] The group planted twenty papaya seedlings on public land – 'public' land, not 'common' land. As they explain, 'in doing so, we broke the existing laws of the state that delineate this space as "public" and thereby set the terms for its use. Our act has two major purposes: one is to

16. See http://www.nomoola.com/diggers/index.html.

EATING IN PUBLIC

grow and share food; the other is to problematize the concept of "public" within public space.' In a scrupulously well-documented and lively narrative, the group describes the challenges to their attempts at 'commoning' in a society where every legal provision has been made to prevent it. The papaya trees were eventually uprooted before they bore fruit, and the land fenced off. The group has subsequently shifted its strategy to another commons: the Internet, where they have set up FreeBay (www.nomoola.com), an online service something like eBay, with the notable exception that everything is free – including papaya seedlings . . .

Wittgenstein's 'No-Ownership Theory'

In his own way, Ludwig Wittgenstein was something of a philosophical digger – though it seems strange to say so of such a socially awkward and solitary man, whose political sympathies were apparently staunchly Stalinist. But consider his lifelong opposition to the widespread use of the metaphor of 'ownership' in philosophical thought. From Descartes on, the political philosophy that accompanied the historical rise of the bourgeoisie made possessive individualism the very essence of freedom, human relations and the constitutive dynamic of society: the individual is free because he is the owner of his self and his actions, freeing him from dependency on the will of others; his freedom is based upon his possessions. This remains the mainstay of neoliberal ideology. Somewhat surprisingly, we find something akin to it in the philosophy of Bertrand Russell, for whom the ideal language of knowledge would necessarily be a *private language*.[17] It is of course not by chance that Wittgenstein was decidedly opposed to both the notion of an ideal language and that of a private language, for the dream of a private language is invariably based on the fact that it would enjoy a more direct, sincere and close correspondence to reality than common language. This was anathema to Wittgenstein's user-based theory of language, which had no use for privileged knowledge, invariably based on the conventional distinction between immediate knowledge (Descartes' 'intuition', Russell's 'knowledge by acquaintance') and indirect, use-inferred knowledge. Wittgenstein definitively debunked the tenacious philosophical myth according to which there exists some sort of immediate 'knowledge' of our sensations, impressions and operations of our mind – a form of knowledge to which we are 'privy'; a private, privileged form of knowledge both in the sense that we alone possess it to the exclusion of all others and in the sense that it constitutes the paradigm and basis for all other knowledge. Insofar as it constitutes 'knowledge' at all, Wittgenstein argued, it is something that is necessarily mediatized by the public use of language. For Wittgenstein's refutation of a private language is disarmingly simple: how, in that case, could I possibly know what I mean?[18]

17. 'A logically perfect language . . . would be to a very great extent the private property of a single speaker.' Bertrand Russell, *Logic and Knowledge, Essays 1901-1950* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956), 198.

Prior to his user-grounded philosophy, in the early 1930s, Wittgenstein had considered other ways of refuting Cartesian dualism, including what Peter Strawson called his 'no-ownership theory' of the subject. Anticipating post-structuralism by a half century, Wittgenstein argued that knowledge production was, logically speaking, a completely anonymous activity: no one owned their thoughts any more than they owned the language that mediated them. As one of his students noted, Wittgenstein was in the habit of quoting with approval Lichtenberg's remark that 'Instead of saying "I think", we should say "It thinks" ("it" being used the way it is in "It's raining").'[19] So who 'owns' thoughts if not the subject who articulates them? Does it not follow that they somehow circulate in an entirely informal collective trust?

18. For more on Wittgenstein's deconstruction of philosophy's private dreams, see Jacques Bouveresse, *Le Mythe de l'intériorité* (Paris: Minuit, 1987).

19. G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Papers* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959), 309.

Epistemological Collaboration, Collaborative Epistemologies

Invention requires a language – it can only take place against the relative stability of a given syntax, grammar and vocabulary. Thus, because no inventor invents his or her own language, but merely brings about a (infinitesimal) transgression in the existent language, he or she is (at best) co-author of any innovation. Gabriel Tarde felt it was impossible to oppose the collective to the singular, the society to the individual, arguing that the singular is the collective *in petto* – that is, organized in keeping with the same multiplicity of relations – and the individual is ontologically inseparable from his or her social dimension. A human being is not a generically social being, but so to speak a society unto herself or himself. George Herbert Mead based his philosophy on a rather similar point. For Mead, identity formation occurs through the medium of linguistic communication, in a language which is always already there. And inasmuch as the subjectivity of one's own intentions, desires and feelings by no means eludes this medium, the agencies of the 'I' and the 'Me', or ego and superego, issue from the same process of socialization.[20] This is perhaps one of the keenest observations of twentieth-century social science, and Jürgen Habermas has placed it at the core of his theory of intersubjectivity. As he writes in his discussion of Mead, 'individuality is a socially produced phenomenon that is a result of the socialization process itself . . . [T]he process of socialization is at the same time one of individuation.'[21] Put another way, intersubjectivity is not constituted by previously constituted subjectivities; it precedes subjectivity and constitutes its condition of possibility. We learn to speak a common language which predates us and which, whatever modest impact we may have upon it, is destined to outlive us. We are what we are in that language by observing how others interact with us

20. See George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 175 ff.

21. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston : Beacon Press, 1989), 58.

and adjusting our relationship accordingly. In order to understand what someone means, I have to be familiar with the context-related conditions of validity of what they have said – and where could I possibly obtain such knowledge if not from the experience of the context itself? This, as we have seen, is Wittgenstein's central insight and the starting point for his use-theory of knowledge: I can understand the meaning of communicative acts only because they are embedded in contexts of action oriented to reaching understanding.

The embedded dynamics of understanding is the material that PUKAR (Partners for Urban Knowledge, Action and Research), a Mumbai-based, citizen-driven knowledge production network, has chosen to work with. The group is made up of researchers, artists and documentary filmmakers anxious to deploy their competence outside the constraints of academic institutions – whose methodologies and priorities are inevitably tied to funding structures like the World Bank – in order to look at research as a more democratic knowledge-production practice. The group engages in what might be described as *cognitive ecology*: 'There is a genuine crisis in the way in which knowledge is being produced,' says co-director Rahul Srivastava. 'The minute you begin to look at knowledge as a discrete category, it becomes important to contextualize. We need expert knowledge and conceptual tools, for concepts are useful fictions; but somehow we overlook their fictional quality. Knowledge is always grounded in a particular context and form of life. Many of PUKAR's projects concern the everyday negotiation of difference through translation in Mumbai's public sphere. Language is chock-full of embedded, pre-reflexive cultural knowledge, *common knowledge*, and we are interested in how Mumbai assembles its nine or so linguistic selves in going about its daily business.'[22] One might say that the group's collaborative epistemology is based on knowledge as a cluster concept – perhaps in the image of urban space itself. The films, workshops and sound projects the group has produced on 'street cosmopolitanism' are compelling – and urgent in the light of the explosion of inter-communal violence in the city several years ago.

22. Interview with the author, Mumbai, 15 February 2005. See the PUKAR website: www.pukar.org.in

But what is knowledge? And what is *common knowledge*? Part of the problem is that we speak of knowledge as if we could 'know' what it is removed from the realities of its producers; as if it were some sort of discrete essence or phenomenon that could be cordoned off from other competing activities like emotion, feeling, belief, and so on. But knowledge is never removed from the pragmatics of context, always already skewed by inequality, which makes knowledge a form of power, and conceptual knowledge often a form of symbolic violence. All too often, what passes for knowledge actually ends up hindering or even thwarting genuine cognitive production by creating barriers to broader epistemological collaboration. Above all, though, as we have seen, knowledge production is

not, and cannot be, a solitary activity. Wittgenstein's famous refutation of the idea of a private language also holds for knowledge as such, which is the very product of what Gabriel Tarde called 'intercerebral co-operation'. In our era so hell-bent on the privatization of knowledge, the harnessing of creativity, the instrumentalization of autonomy all in the name of producing consumerist subjectivity, this is a political issue. For either we accept that knowledge is collective, or we lose it altogether. Commodified knowledge is not really knowledge at all, any more than a strategic friendship is a friendship.

And what about art, is it knowledge? Most people would agree that art has a cognitive dimension, or that it can produce knowledge, but many would shy away from asserting that art actually is a form of knowledge. Art, too, is an experimental form of intercerebral co-operation, and it is explicitly and symbolically so in the case of collective production, when artists accept to work together. It is even more manifestly the case when artists collaborate outside of the framework of art, beyond the legitimating borders of the institutional art world, which partition art off from what analytical philosophers rather insolently call 'the mere real thing'. For in those cases, art must abandon its conventional pretences and get involved in working to produce knowledge. Autonomous knowledge production initiatives are cropping up in virtually every big city. PUKAR is one among several in Mumbai. In Buenos Aires, one finds the Mesa de Escraches, in which the artist collectives such as the Grupo de Arte Callejero, Grupo Etcetera and the Taller Popular de Serigraphia are actively involved.[23] The Universite Tangente founded by Bureau d'etudes in Paris is another.[24] But the academic overtones of 'university' are misleading, because the type of knowledge at issue is not academic, and is unconstrained by academic protocol, compromise, methodology and hierarchy. When one actually looks at the forms of knowledge being generated, one realizes the extent to which cognitive emotion and experimental epistemology is inherent to this kind of initiative. In some way, these deep-digging knowledge-producing initiatives stand in relation to the mainstream art world the way the Diggers did to nascent possessive individualism. Do the Diggers' demands for the abolition of monopolies and great landowners – of Private Enclosure, Wealth and Privilege, as Winstanley starkly put it – not resonate in contemporary demands for limits upon media concentration, surveillance technology and impunity for the happy few? The digging continues.

23. An *escrache* is a sort of collective performance, drawing attention to the ongoing presence in Buenos Aires' residential neighbourhoods of those who, in one capacity or another, took part in the murderous activities of the military government between 1976 and 1983. These actions, where the production of memory and knowledge is inseparable from the production of form, seek to constitute a sort of social memory and a popular understanding at the neighbourhood level of how the dictatorship actually functioned, so as to prevent its re-emergence. For a more in-depth discussion, see my 'The Delicate Essence of Artistic Collaboration', in *Third Text*, no. 71, November 2004.

24. See http://utangente.free.fr/.

McKenzie Wark

Copyright, Copyleft, Copygift

The current free market system and the existing legal system block the free development of our culture. In order to change this, McKenzie Wark, author of *A Hacker Manifesto*, argues for a shift from a commercial economy to a gift economy, where the focus is on social relations rather than on profit.

Any work – of art, of writing – in any media, if it is in the least bit interesting, becomes at some point an adventure. Usually, the adventure happens in the making, before the work is finished. 'The work is the death mask of its conception', says Walter Benjamin. But sometimes the adventure begins, or continues, after the work is finished, reanimating it with fresh problems. That's what happened to me.

I wrote a book once about intellectual property. Basically, I am against it. As I wrote in this book, called *A Hacker Manifesto*: 'Information wants to be free but is everywhere in chains.' The digital – an age-old property of information – is an idea whose time has finally come. The relation between digitally encoded information and the material in which you find it – the page, the screen, the disc, the drive – is now perfectly arbitrary. Pretty much the same information could be on this page or that disc or that website. A weird ontological property of information, something in its very being, is now fully active in the world – and causing all kinds of trouble. Not least for authors. Not least for me.

On the one side, a vast social movement has arisen that intuits the significance of digital information as a social fact. In its more public and self-conscious forms, this social movement includes Creative Commons, the Open Source and Free Software Movement. But this is just the tip of the iceberg. Submerged out of sight is a vast culture of file sharing, whether using torrents or plain old CDs passed from hand to hand. This private, pervasive new economy – a gift economy in which the artefact is nothing and its digital information everything – might be an even more significant part of this social movement than its more publicly declared aspects.

On the other side are the entrenched interests of the corporate world which, particularly in the 'over-developed' rely more and more on their portfolios of trademarks, patents, copyrights and on trade secret law to stay in business. In *A Hacker Manifesto* I argue that these corporations are the legal expression of a new kind of class interest. No longer a capitalist class, but a vectoralist class. The key to their power is not physical capital such as factories and warehouses, but rather vectors through which it controls information such as the logistics of the supply chain, and the brands, patents and copyrights under which the company's wealth of information is protected. The vectoralist class only incidentally sells things. It sells images, ideas, data, strapped willy-nilly onto things you can buy, from T-shirts to DVDs, from pills to iPods.

Hacker Class

Caught between the social movement of free culture and the corporate interests of this vectoralist class are what I called the hacker class. Not just computer hackers, but anyone who makes new information, whether as a scientist or artist or writer or musician. This hacker class, this creative cohort, has interests that are really closer to the social movement for free culture and the new gift economies it is spontaneously

creating. Intellectual property presents itself as being about the interests of the 'creator', but it is really about the interests of the 'owner'. In practice, making a work of music or art or a new drug is not something you can do on your own. You need help from the owners of the vectors along which it might be distributed. So you end up selling your rights as a creator to those who own the means of realizing its value – the vectoralist class.

So I wrote a book about this, *A Hacker Manifesto*, and found myself in exactly this situation. A book is just a personal diary unless someone else reads it, but getting other people to read it is not easy. Of course I put versions of it as a work in progress out on the Internet, particularly via the nettime.org mailing list. It was discussed, derided, dismissed, but also reposted, put up on websites, and so on. It still leads an underground existence, as one of those texts with which people in the net art and theory world may have some glancing acquaintance.

It got me invited places. I travelled the world with it. There were 'amateur' (and good) translations in Spanish and French. It was, on a tiny scale, the new gift economy in action. Make something, give it away, let people find it and do what they want with it, and sooner or later someone will *return the gift*. Someone will offer something back, even if it is just their own time and attention to what you made.

There isn't anything particularly noble or self-sacrificing about this gift economy. It doesn't rely on anyone being a saint. It's just about using the strange ontological properties of the digital to enable new ways of producing social relations out of human vanity. Everyone who makes something, an artwork, a song, a text, wants people to pay attention to them. One way to get people to pay attention is to give them your work. Like any gift it gives with it an obligation – in this case very slight – to treat the gift as something other than just a thing, as just stuff.

Social Relations

What digital technology makes possible is a vast outpouring of the gift. Now everyone has a blog that can be read by anybody, only there's nobody there to read it. Everybody is too busy writing their own blog. So out of this vast excrescence of the free, new gift economies emerge. Bloggers post comments on each other's blogs. They add each other to their blog rolls. They do group blogs. Little communities of attention form. It was exactly like this in the list-server world in the '90s (and before that on The Well and Bulletin Board communities.) Things being free isn't enough. It is also about making social relations that bind people with a weak but widespread obligation to treat what each other does as more than just objects, more than just stuff. It's about thinking of oneself as something besides a consumer.

This is the social core of the social movement around free information. It's not really about technology, although that is a part of it. Nor is it really about law. Lawyers such as Lawrence Lessig made important contributions to the

Cover *A Hacker Manifesto*, 2004

movement, but the fundamental questions are not legal. It's about new kinds of social relations. It is about the very possibility of social relations.

It's hard not to be a consumer. It's what we are most of the time. There's work, where we earn the money, and there's non-work, where we spend the money. Most of our time is spent either servicing others as consumers or being serviced as consumers. In its vectoralist form, commodity culture has evolved a sophisticated way of treating us as its consumers. It's all about crafting an image and a brand for a commodity that makes it appear as something more than a mere thing. The thing – be it a T-shirt or a carton of orange juice – is the support for an experience, mediated by a brand and an image that makes us feel special, that makes us feel unique.

The constellation of brands with which I surround myself may not make me unique, but they do make me rare. The brand is rarefying. The shoes I am wearing right now are a brand called Roos. They would not be special to the sneaker fan, but they are to me. Their logo is a kangaroo, and being from Australia I feel some vague affinity with these shoes. I may not be the only man who wears them, but I am probably one of a very few Australian men who wears them, and quite possibly the only Australian man who wears them in pink.

As with shoes, so with books. I'm more of a book shopper than a shoe shopper. I'll make do with slightly interesting shoes, but will go out of my way to buy rare and exotic books and display them on my shelves, and even sometimes read them. People who make a fetish of their books know, just like shoe fans know, that it makes a difference whose brand is on it. If it is published by Verso or Semiotext(e), I'm much more likely to check it out. Like any shoe fan, I am aware of how gentrification works with my chosen products. Things pioneered by the smaller, cooler publishers get picked up and mass marketed by Routledge or Continuum.

Dilemma

So here was my dilemma: I wrote a book against intellectual property, and yet to get people to read it, to get it beyond a certain level, I needed a publisher – and a brand name publisher at that. You can get a text read if you give it away freely, particularly if you are a dedicated participant in a gift economy. If you are paying attention to other people's texts, then some of those people will pay attention to yours. But most people still define value in culture through the commodity. If its not branded and marketed, how can it really have any value?

So I sent *A Hacker Manifesto* to half a dozen publishers, all of whom turned it down. Sadly, two of my personal favourites, Verso and Semiotext(e), passed on it. Thus putting an end to every writer's dream of becoming the very brand we most like to consume. The publisher who said yes was Harvard University Press. I sent the manuscript off to Lindsay Waters, executive editor, and a week later he phoned. Lindsay had been an editor at the third of my favourite publishers – University of Minnesota Press – when it published a

terrific series called 'Theory and History of Literature'. At Minnesota Lindsay published Bataille, Lyotard, Deleuze, Guattari, Jameson. At Harvard he publishes Benjamin, Spivak, Hardt and Negri. Without kidding myself that I belonged on that list, I was nevertheless chuffed to be in such capable hands.

One problem: Harvard would not release the book under the Creative Commons license. Just wouldn't budge on this issue. So what was I to do? Frankly, I have never thought Creative Commons was the key to the movement. It's a useful tool, or set of tools, just like its predecessor, the General Public License. But I don't think the social movement is really about law. It's about creating new social relations. This was just a hunch at this point. I wouldn't get a chance to think it through until after the book came out. At this point I just thought: publish and be damned.

Desirable

I had a great time working with Harvard. I gave a talk to their staff. I gave another talk to their sales reps. That was a harder crowd to please, but we bonded over love of obscure bookstores. We agreed that the book itself had to be a thing of beauty, a desirable object. Designer Tim Jones gave it a classical look, as though it were not some flashy, fashionable extrusion of Internet culture, but something else. Something untimely. It had to be well designed, to give people a reason to want it as a thing, even when the ideas in it were all available free on the Internet. The – now rare – first editions even came with a luscious clear plastic dust jacket.

It sold pretty well. It got reviewed. I was invited more places. But now this was a different thing. I was no longer a member of a gift economy of squabbling but somehow like-minded Internet theorists, artists and activists. I was the author of a book. It wasn't my first book, so it wasn't so strange. But it was the first time I had really thought about the difference between the gift economy of the net and the commodity culture of publishing.

In the world I came to know through nettime, nobody was selling anything. There were definitely 'hierarchies', but these had more to do with who you could rely on to really pay attention to something. You figure out after a while who can give and receive the gift of attention. Everybody who posts to a listserver wants attention, but not everybody knows how to give it. Interestingly, not everyone knows how to receive it, either. A gift economy is a perennial work in progress, as astute readers of Bataille or Baudrillard might have expected.

But being on a book tour posed something of a dilemma. *A Hacker Manifesto* argued that there is something inherently limiting about treating art or writing as property. And yet there I was, hawking it as property. 'Live the contradictions!' I told people. Rather than trying to be pure of heart and moral of character, it's more interesting to explore exactly why it isn't possible to lead a just life in an unjust world. 'One cannot commit evil in evil', as Jean Genet once said.

But that's not a very satisfying answer. What I needed was a tactic. So I decided that everywhere I went I would offer to sell the book to people (and here I would hold up the pretty little book), or I would give it away as a text file (here I would hold up the flash memory stick on my key ring). *A Hacker Manifesto* could be both gift and commodity. You could buy it anywhere, at the chain stores even, or on the Internet, but if you wanted it free you had to get it directly from me, as a gift from one person to the other.

Interestingly, I still sold lots of books. Sometimes the same people who copied it onto their flash memory also bought the bound and printed book. If I gave the text file away as a gift, I asked the recipient for an email address. I said they could give it to whomever they liked, but please don't put the file on the Internet. I emailed the recipients later and thanked them for their interest. I'm still corresponding with some of them two years later. In short, I wanted to see if it was possible to have a gift economy that was personal, specific, localized in time and space, alongside the commodity economy.

It's related, I think, to the strange custom of signing books. People like to have the author sign the book. It adds a layer of gift to the commodity, particularly if the author dedicates the book to the recipient by name or adds a line specific to the encounter. This points back to an old belief about the nature of authorship. As culture philosopher and media theoretician Friedrich Kittler might say, it is about the mythology of the spirit animating the author's pen. It seems somehow more contemporary to give the reader the text file. That's the real working tool of the act of authoring these days.

I made a conscious decision to give away text files and not pdfs. I hate pdfs! You can search them, but you can't change them. They read poorly on the screen. They have too many of the artificial limitations of the book about them. Guy Debord once took all his films out of circulation. But in the era of the video copy, this came to look like a somewhat futile gesture. So later he decided to acknowledge that there may be screenings, but *none of them would be authorized.* This is the quality I like about giving away a text file. There's no guarantee it is as the author left it. It is not authorized. It belongs to the reader, to do with as she pleases. Yes, the text can be a gift, but you have to ask. It's personal. It's not about law, its about making the social relation. Not copyright or copyleft, but copygift. This was the adventure: learning how a text can be a gift.

So that was how I lived the contradiction: commodity and gift, thing and information, legal relation and social relation. If critical theory is not to become hypocritical theory, it has to get its hands dirty with these questions of form. Not just questions of the literary form of the text but also its legal form, its gift form, its technological form, its design form, and so on. Not 'the death of the author.' Not 'the author as producer'. Not 'there is nothing outside the text'. We need a new slogan. Or

rather, no more slogans. Just new practices, hacking the work. We can refuse the distinction between reader/writer, consumer/producer, text/context. There is only and only ever the play of the work in progress.

Brian Holmes

The Absent Rival

Radical Art in a Political Vacuum

Cultural critic Brian Holmes explains how in communal space, which is determined more and more by technology, the privatization of knowledge continues to increase. Can language and communication still be meaningful in this context?

Was there ever an avant-garde without enlightened industrialists? Is it possible to shock the bourgeoisie in technocratic societies? Does anyone have ears to hear what artists are saying? Or has privatization destroyed even the common space where words have their meaning?

Our story begins with the archetypal scene of tactical media: the moment when the Yes Men arrive in disguise at their first pseudo-corporate lectures. They expected to raise shock, tumult, outrage, fisticuffs and all manner of projectiles hurled from the floor to halt their delirious speeches, which to their minds were twisted Malthusian parodies of contemporary neoliberal discourse. Instead everybody smiled, shook hands, discussed the finer points (could we really solve our productivity problems by convincing Italians to give up sex in the afternoon?) and asked politely for a business card. There was no awareness of the critique. In fact, what has never happened in the last ten years of intensifying debate over the global expansion of neoliberalism is the slightest recognition from the corporate class that something might be wrong. It's as though what's called a 'pang of conscience' – that ghostly moment when the stakes of someone else's life or death impinges on your sensibility – had vanished from the minds of those who manage the world's industrial development.

To understand the consequences of the 'privatization of knowledge' we will have to discuss the conditions under which words meet ears, or the technological conditions under which human expression circulates. Simultaneously we will have to discuss the control of technologically mediated speech. And finally we will discuss the means, milieus and motives for intervention. But first let's consider what it's like to talk when no one's in the room, or what communication might mean in the absence of a conscience.

Skeletons in Suits

Imagine one of the most banal locations on Earth. It's called the Millennium Conference Centre in London, England. A gentleman named 'Erastus Hamm' will deliver a PowerPoint lecture for the Dow Chemical Corporation, on the subject of risk management. No one realizes that the ham actor is Andy Bichlbaum of the Yes Men, that the 'Dow Ethics' website which the conference organizers consulted is a fake, and that the speaker is about to present an ironic condemnation of the principles on which corporations like Dow are founded. The unfortunate thing is – they still won't realize it at the end of the speech, which the Yes Men have expertly captured on video.[1]

1. For the lecture, photos and a clip from the video, see www.dowethics.com/risk/launch.html.

Hamm explains that Dow is about to release Acceptable Risk: the first world's first fully automatic risk calculator. AR will help corporations decide where to locate their most dangerous industrial operations, the ones that could become liabilities: 'Will project X be just another skeleton in the closet, something your company comes to regret, or will it be a golden skeleton?' Hamm discusses Agent Orange, the poison Dow sold for US Army use in Vietnam, and he claims that even in 1970, the AR calculator would have predicted a positive balance, for the corporation anyway. He brings up another case, IBM's sale of technology to World War II Germany to help identify certain races – and a Nazi sign flashes up on

Yes Men 'Erastus Hamm' photographed with a businessman and the gold skeleton of Gilda.

the screen next to the IBM logo. Definitely a skeleton in the closet, but once again, it's golden!

Applied in our time, Dow's AR device is supposed to calculate liability settlements on big industrial disasters, showing clearly that certain lives in certain regions of the world are worth a lot more than other lives in other regions. The tacit example here, which underlies all of the Yes Men's work on Dow Chemical, is the 1984 disaster at a Union Carbide chemical plant in Bhopal, India, killing an estimated 20,000 people. The corporation paid a minimal settlement and left behind over 100,000 wounded, as well as tremendous pollution. In 2001 it was acquired by Dow, which still refuses any liability.

The upbeat presentation ends with a glittering bone-dance on the screen, then a pop, flash and plume of smoke in the room as the golden skeleton Gilda is unveiled from beneath a crimson cloak. Chuckling businessmen and women are encouraged to come up, take a card and an AR keychain and have themselves photographed next to Gilda, while occasional jerky footage of the crowd, shot from a miniature camera installed in Erastus Hamm's geeky-looking glasses, reminds you that this surreal event is actually *cinéma verité*. But the astonishing part comes afterwards, in the candid dialogues the businessmen engage in with the phoney Dow representative. Simplex Consulting representative to Hamm:

— As I understood it your risk assessor will work out what the human impact is as opposed to how much money you can make on it (big smile). *Whatever way you do this, you're gonna cost some lives, right? But you're gonna make some money in the process of it! It's acceptable! Is that right?*
— Well, yeah, that's exactly what I said. Did you find that not, um . . . ?
— I thought it was refreshing, actually!

So what does the Acceptable Risk calculator prove to the watchers of the Yes Men video? That there's no risk in offering up the most extreme scenarios, so long as they come with a golden keychain? Or maybe that decades of neoliberal greed have eliminated any risk of conscience among high-level business executives? Could there be a zombie at the wheel, in the age of corporate governance? And if so, where is the juggernaut of contemporary capitalism really headed?

Counseling the Prince

Enter an unusual figure: Bernard Stiegler, the French philosopher who leans to the left, believes in industry, dreams of technology, and wants to be the counsellor of the prince. He worries about the collapse of today's 'libidinal economy' and thinks Europe should develop a new industrial model. He's also nostalgic for the statism of General de Gaulle, dislikes anyone who wears tennis shoes and shows every sign of being a cultural conservative. One of his latest books (but he publishes three or four a year) is dedicated to Laurence Parisot, the president of the French bosses' union: a corporate crusader to whom he proposes 'saving capitalism' by 're-enchanting the world'. Stiegler's ideas are stimulating but also weirdly naive, pragmatic yet strangely delirious. Let's have a closer look.

His first move is to establish an equivalence between the technologies of cognitive capitalism and what Foucault calls

'the writing of the self'. As the ancient Greeks shaped their inner lives through the memory-aids of intimate diaries (*hypomnemata*) to which they consigned formative quotations and reflections, so we postmoderns shape our own subjectivities through the use of computers, video cameras, mp3 players and the Internet. The mediation of externalized linguistic techniques is fundamental to the process of individuation. The problem is that these 'technologies of the mind' – or 'relationship technologies', to use Jeremy Rifkin's term – now take the form of networked devices connecting each singular existence to massive service industries operating at a global level. As Stiegler says, 'service capitalism makes all segments of human existence into the targets of a permanent and systematic control of attention and behaviour – the targets of statistics, formalizations, rationalizations, investments and commodifications.'[2] Or in Rifkin's less abstract words: 'The company's task is to create communities for the purpose of establishing long-term commercial relationships and optimizing the lifetime value of each customer.'[3]

2. Bernard Stiegler & Ars Industrialis, *Réenchanter le monde: La valeur esprit contre le populisme industriel* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006), 38. All further Stiegler quotes are from this book.

Here we see that the fundamental commodification is not that of intellectual property. Rather it is commodification of cognition itself, which becomes a calculable quantity ('lifetime value') to be channelled into relational patterns that meet the needs of giant corporations. It is *we* who then perform the service. In Stiegler's view, this 'proletarianization' of entire populations acts to destroy sublimated desire, leaving people open to the gregariously aggressive drives of 'industrial populism'. The pandering of bellicose politicians on Berlusconi's or Murdoch's TVs gives some idea of what he means. The question is whether the networked technologies will merely confirm the destructive effects of television, or whether they can be transformed.

3. Jeremy Rifkin, *The Age of Access* (New York: Putnam, 2000), 109.

To conceptualize the way that civilizational development shapes the thoughts and actions of individuals via the mediation of technology, Stiegler introduces the term 'grammatization'. It is the process whereby the existential flow of human thought and action is analyzed into discrete segments and reproduced in abstract forms or 'grams' – the most evident example being the writing of language. Indeed, all the varieties of *hypomnemata* or externalized memory can be seen as techniques for patterning the way people think, speak and act. This structuralization of behaviour is endless, operating through various codes and media; its recent manifestations include the analysis of human gestures known as Taylorization (the scientific basis for the Fordist assembly line). The enforced repetition of specific sequences of actions forecloses the existential possibility of becoming oneself, or individuation. TV programming, which imposes an identical modulation of thought and affect upon millions of viewers at the same time, represents a pinnacle of enforced repetition. Similar remarks could be made about computer programs like Windows. But the relationship to grammatical patterning is not necessarily one of pure imposition.

With an astonishing historical image, Stiegler suggests that Egyptian hieroglyphic writing 'allowed for the control of floodwaters, of flows and stocks of commodities, and of the work of slaves, through the intermediary of scribes specialized in the

protection of royal or Pharaonic power'. Subsequently, however, 'these *hypomnemata*, which for centuries had been in the service of an increasingly rigid royal power . . . became in ancient Greece the principle of a new process of individuation, that is, *of a new relationship between the psychic and the collective*: the citizen became a new dynamic principle whereby the Greeks rapidly transformed the entire Mediterranean basin.' Writing becomes not only a vector for authority, but also an instrument of self-government. Yet this transformation opens up the basic problems of democracy, as they appear in Plato's *Phaedrus*: 'Writing, which is a *pharmakon*, a remedy whereby the process of individuation takes care of itself and struggles against the poison that threatens to destroy it at the heart of its own dynamism, is also a poison that allows the sophists to manipulate public opinion, that is, to destroy the dynamism and make it into a diabolic force that ruins the symbolic: a power of dissociation leading to the loss of individuation.'

Stiegler points to the need to take care of the role of mental technologies in the process of psychic and social individuation. He borrows from Gilbert Simondon the idea that each technological system gradually transforms over time, becoming increasingly distinct *as a system* through the progressive differentiation of all its interdependent devices. He also borrows the related idea that each singular pathway of human individuation (the process that allows one to say 'I') is inextricably bound up with a broader pathway of collective individuation (the process that allows us to say 'we'). The individuation of each 'I' is inscribed in that of the 'we' from its very outset; but it is only the differentiation of the two that allows both processes to continue. And this differentiation is multiple: each 'I' is intertwined with different 'we's' unfolding at different scales (family, town, region, nation, language group, etcetera). What Stiegler claims to add to Simondon is the realization that the twofold process of psychosocial individuation is inseparable from the process of technological individuation, to the extent that the former is dependent on the specific kinds of externalized memory made possible by the latter. In other words: I become who *I* am, and we become who *we* are, within the range of possibilities offered by the concomitant evolution of the recording machines to which *I/we* have access. And this specific and constantly evolving range of technological possibilities can serve to further the process of twofold individuation, or to destroy it.

In this new light the industrial development of the Internet appears as a potentially dynamic principle of technological writing, offering an historical chance to go beyond the stultifying effects of television. Stiegler illustrates those effects by quoting Patrick Le Lay, CEO of the premier French commercial channel TF1, who infamously declared at a corporate strategy session that what he could sell to Coca-Cola was 'available human brain time' for their advertisements. Le Lay is the epitome of a cultural manager without a gram of conscience. But a similar predatory instinct is behind the developments of American-style service capitalism (and it's surprising that Stiegler doesn't draw the parallel with Kenneth Lay, former CEO of Enron, who practiced the most extreme financial sophistry of the entire New Economy[4]). The Internet as a 'global mnemotechnical

4. See the excellent documentary *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, dir. Alex Gibney, 109' (USA, 2005).

system' is itself threatened by industrial populism, whose massively damaging consequences we see all around us – above all in global warming created by the Fordist economy, whose effects have become undeniable at the very moment of war for oil hegemony in Iraq.

A response would have to be imagined at a continental scale, as the smallest possible rival to Anglo-American globalization. Only at the European level could one envisage an effective, upward-leading spiral of reciprocal emulation, where singularities challenge each another in the quest for a better world that lies beyond everyone's horizon. Stiegler's thinking reaches its peak when he imagines a continental rivalry. But this also provokes the desperate appeal to the French corporate elite, whom he thinks could be convinced of the need to spark a European response to really-existing cognitive capitalism.

Here we come to the heart of the question. Who could possibly believe that the corporate raiders who gathered around Patrick Le Lay are now going to band together to save capitalism from its own self-destruction? Who really believes, that the businessmen who met in Davos last January are ready to rescue the planet from climate change? Maybe the better question is whether Stiegler's elaborately crafted appeal to the corporate elite is not a subtle fiction, stimulating readers to imagine all the practical changes required to transform the technological basis of what is ultimately a cultural system. The pragmatic political text would then become a piece of delirious philosophical sophistry, whose real target is the formation of public opinion. The key thing to realize is that epochal change could come from either end of the techno-cultural system: just as the industrial production of better mnemonic devices would stimulate a higher level of participatory culture, so the latter would itself create a broader demand for more intricate and useful machines for self-government. And if we consider the track-record of our capitalist elites, then the cultural demand might seem a much more likely starting point than the industrial offer.

So instead of following the philosopher any further – either in his attempts at counselling the corporate prince, or in his dodgy ideas about sublimation[5] – let us take the avenue offered by his delirious fiction, and look instead for the real driving forces of a critical and emancipatory use of mnemotechnics. I refer, of course, to the production of free software and to the recent upsurge of media interventionism, including but not limited to the exploits of the Yes Men. Here we shall again encounter forms of rivalry and questions of conscience – all mixed into a poison which is also a remedy.

5. Cf. B. Stiegler, *Aimer, s'aimer, nous aimer* (Paris: Galilée, 2003).

Letters and Destinations

There is an obvious place to look for positive transformations of networked technology: in cooperatively written, non-proprietary computer code, which comes to most people's desktop as a Linux operating system. But Linux forks into as many as 300 different 'distributions', from Debian to Red Hat via Slackware and Ubuntu, all constructed out of a basic core. Linux and its various 'flavours' are related like Saussurian *langue* and *parole*. The collective project of free software creation continually opens new possibilities from a shared horizon, differentiating along a singular path even as

it consolidates the fundamental distinction of a non-commodified technical system.

Common interpretations speak of a 'high-tech gift economy', where each contribution to the collective pot translates into the multiplying wealth of riches for everyone. But holding closer to the ideas of anthropologist Marcel Mauss, one could conceive certain 'gifts' as charged with antagonism, devised in reality to crush an opponent with overwhelming abundance. When the wildly popular music-exchange service, Napster, was shut down by legal attacks from the record companies, free-software programmers immediately launched new formats of peer-to-peer exchange, which had no central clearing-house. Let the thousand song-lists bloom, they said. The record companies began to founder – and Hollywood trembled as p2p video made the scene. Why such a concerted reaction from the hacking community? Behind the copyrighted tunes were all the metaphysical subtleties of free software's ancient enemy: private property.

Seizing upon the very device that is used to secure the exclusive ownership of intellectual property, Richard Stallman created the General Public License. This specially formulated copyright contract insures that any computer code written cooperatively will remain open to future modification by other programmers for other uses. The poison of copyright is turned into its own remedy. Stallman himself makes a curious observation about how this came to pass: 'In 1984 or 1985, Don Hopkins (a very imaginative fellow) mailed me a letter. On the envelope he had written several amusing sayings, including this one: 'Copyleft – all rights reversed.' I used the word 'copyleft' to name the distribution concept I was developing at the time.'[6]

6. Richard Stallman, 'The GNU Project,' at www.gnu.org/gnu/thegnuproject.html.

Few people realize that the keyword of today's most emancipatory technology came mailed through the post. Even fewer probably realize that the term 'copyleft' was independently invented by the artist Ray Johnson, founder of the 'New York Correspond*a*nce School'.[7] But one thing is obvious when you consider art history: Mail Art provided the matrix from which radical uses of the Internet would spring. Participatory practices of cooperative and differentialist creativity put an indelible stamp on the letters of contemporary activism, which are still reaching their destination in the world of technopolitics.

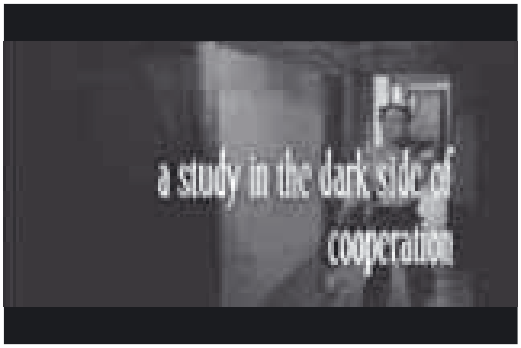
7. See McKenzie Wark, 'From Mail Art to Net.art: Ray Johnson and the Lives of the Saints', at www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0210/msg00040.html.

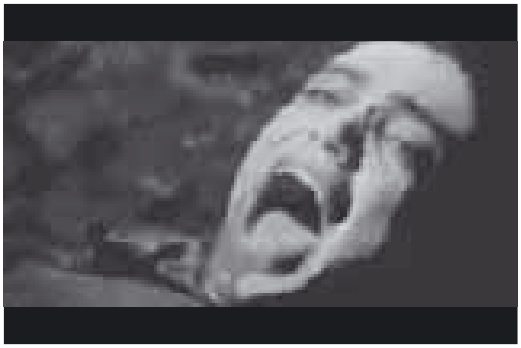
Robert Filliou coined the name of the 'Eternal Network' to describe the mail art circuit way back in the 1960s. In 1992, Vittore Baroni sketched a prescient diagram that history has confirmed. In the centre of a tree of words is a vertical trunk that reads networking. Radiating out from the top are the technical possibilities: small press, photocopier, mail, phone, fax, cassette, video. Amidst all the others, computer is still just one more, already sprouting the leaves of email, virtual link, interactive art.[8] Exchanges from peer to peer were already a reality, even before the Internet as we know it.

8. Vittore Baroni, *Arte postale* (Bertiolo: AAA Edizioni, 1997), 235.

In between those two dates is an interview with Ray Johnson, published in 1982 in *Lotta Poetica* (Verona, Italy), with a preface by Henry Martin that may give the best feeling for the prehistory of the net: 'To me, Ray Johnson's Correspondence

Stills from the film *On Blood and Wings: A Study in the Dark Side of Cooperation*.





School seems simply an attempt to establish as many significantly human relationships with as many individual people as possible. . . . [R]elationships where true experiences are truly shared and where what makes an experience true is its participation in a secret libidinal energy. And the relationships that the artist values so highly are something that he attempts to pass on to others. The classical exhortation of a Ray Johnson mailing is "please send to . . ."'[9] Mail art is an addressing system for the multiplication of desire. Or as William Wilson wrote, 'Ray Johnson is a mild-mannered choreographer who sets people in motion.'[10]

9. Quoted in Donna De Salvo and Catherine Gudis (eds.), *Ray Johnson* (Columbus: Wexner Center/Paris: Flammarion, 1999), 186.
10. Ibid., 147.

Contact through a far-flung network became part of what Ulises Carrión referred to as the shift from 'personal worlds' to 'cultural strategies.'[11] These were initially restricted to a few hundred, then a few thousand artists exchanging singular desires. But as time progressed and technologies ramified, the pleasurable consciousness of the existence of one's peers became doubled by letters coming from further afield, bearing that affect of conscience that pierces the narcissistic mirror. Hackers inspired by Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* changed the postal system into a real-time flux of underground information. News from the South of the planet, brought by the new functionalities of email, reminded inhabitants of the North what their money was actually doing. Namely, impoverishing entire regions in the name of single-commodity exports and forced loan repayments administered by the IMF. After the first Global Days of Action in 1998, 'cultural strategies' came to mean the art of mobilizing tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands of people. The networked protests of Seattle and Genoa, then the anti-war marches of 15 February 2003, appear as watersheds in retrospect. But that's because we don't know the responses to the disasters that lie ahead. The privatization of everything may still be confronted with the contagion of contrary desires. It all depends on what we make of technology – and with whom.

11. Ulises Carrión, 'Personal Worlds or Cultural Strategies?' in: *Second Thoughts* (Amsterdam: Void, 1980).

B – B Prime

The philosopher Christoph Spehr sums it all up, in a recent film which violates every provision of copyright. *On Blood and Wings: A Study in the Dark Side of Cooperation* is a contribution to the cutting edge of Marxist theory, clipped from the archives of B-grade vampire flicks.[12] The point is to describe a senseless momentum. As Tony Conrad's ghostly voice intones against a gory backdrop: 'The blood thing is the only thing you have to know to understand capitalism. The vampire can't act without the blood. And he doesn't keep it, he doesn't feed on it in a way that he would ever be full. . . . He's more like a machine that is fuelled by blood. And the blood he takes only drives him to search for new blood. Like Marx put it in *Capital*: B leads to B prime. If you understand this, it will greatly improve your life under capitalism.'

12. The film can be downloaded at www.wbk.in-berlin.de/movies/on-blood-and-wings_80mb.mp4.

Spehr ranges through the depravity of a civilization and its spectacles, showing how everyone in the developed societies – whether in the academy, the technology sectors or even in activism – comes gradually under the fangs. We are the dash

between B and B prime. But the leading edge of a new productive system carries its promise along with its poison, at least when it remains in touch with the past that gives the future meaning: 'Technology becomes more and more important in the fight against capitalism: networking, communications, the Internet, new forms of organizing. But the core of the action – the social struggle – is still the basis, and cannot be replaced by any of that.'

The film that began with the Prince of Darkness comes to an end with a sunrise in Mexico, and with a reflection on the way that solidarity acts as a grounding force to control the avant-gardes, who are necessarily infected: 'The ones we expose to highly contaminated areas – like boards, parliaments, any forms of leadership and representation – are always in danger, and they *are* a danger.' So while the would-be hero from the North goes off to a new struggle, the comrade from the South tells him he will 'pray . . . pray for the good medicine'. And the lesson of the *pharmakon* returns, as we hear the ghostly voice repeating 'pray . . . pray for the good medicine'.

Tactical media comes back here with a vengeance. Christoph Spehr has produced a bottom-up vision of transformations that Bernard Stiegler can only imagine from top down. The aim is to produce a confrontation with the absent rival. But the means can only be a complex alchemy of emancipation, where artistic motifs and advanced technology encounter the mobilizing powers of desire.

Today the latest Yes Men film is being produced by Arte and Channel Four. The industrialists have still not felt the fangs of conscience, but a few cultural bureaucrats are starting to see the work of the vanguards, and to respond to a deeper call of solidarity. A disclaimer on Spehr's film says it's designed for political education only: 'Any screenings outside this context may be a violation of copyright laws.' It's time to reopen the space where words meet ears. In the age of global war and global warming, what's the danger of being bit by the law? The least we can do is to bring some political education into the infected realms of public institutions.

Joost Smiers

Art without Copyright

A Proposal for Alternative Regulation

Joost Smiers, researcher at the Research Group of Arts and Economics at the HKU in Utrecht, is currently working on a book, *Imagining a World Without Copyright*. In this publication he outlines his objections to the contemporary copyright system and sketches the contours of a new system. This text describes, in broad strokes, the themes found in his book.

Serious cracks are surfacing in the copyright system, as we have known it in the Western world for centuries. The system is more beneficial for cultural conglomerates than for the average artist.[1] Furthermore, it seems unavoidable that digitization is undermining the foundations of the copyright system. Several authors have recently analysed and criticized the durability of the contemporary copyright system. Yet, most of their observations only obliquely address two fundamental questions: if copyright is an unjust system, what should come in its place to reward creative and productive artists in poor as well as rich lands for their labours, and how can we prevent knowledge and creativity from being privatized?

1. Artist in this context refers to creative as well as productive artists.

The assumption is that the contemporary copyright system is a mechanism that allows only a few cultural conglomerates the opportunity to control the broad field of cultural and artistic communication. This harms the interest of artists and the public domain a great deal. For non-Western lands, Western intellectual property rights are a downright disaster. Their knowledge and creativity are being plundered and they must fork out a great deal to be able to benefit from the fruits of their labours. The product of centuries of Western thinking on this topic cannot be erased with a single stroke of the pen: it is hard in the West to imagine a world without copyright that could still produce films, theatrical productions, novels, pieces of music, paintings and multimedia spectacles.

Most artists benefit very little from the copyright system. For them the system also provides few incentives to create or perform artistic works. Thus the incentive argument – artists stop working when they stop receiving copyright payments – does not hold: 'Copyright today is less about incentives or compensation than it is about control.'[2] 'Firms in the creative industries are able to "free-ride" on the willingness of artists to create and the structure of the artists' labour markets, characterized by short-term working practices and oversupply, make it hard for artists to appropriate awards.'[3] One may add to this observation that 'value of copyright royalty rates is decided in the marketplace and it is therefore artists' bargaining power with firms in the creative industries that determines copyright earnings. Artists' bargaining power is, however, considerably weakened by the persistence of excess supply of creative workers to the creative industries. As with artists' earnings from other art sources, the individual's distribution of copyright earnings is highly skewed with a few top stars earning considerable sums but the medium or 'typical' author earning only small amounts from their various rights.'[4]

2. Jessica Litman, *Digital Copyright* (Amherst/New York: Prometeus Books, 2001), 80.

3. Ruth Towse, 'Copyright and Cultural Policy for the Creative Industries', in: Ove Grandstrand (ed.), *Economics, Law and Intellectual Property,* (Amsterdam: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 10.

4. Ibid, 11.

We must also face the reality that digitization is axing the roots of the copyright system. Digitization has made sampling very simple. This can lead to something new, but also to work that differs little from the work of the past. It is helpful from another perspective as

well. In the world of copyright, there has always been a bizarre distinction between an idea and its expression. In the digital age, however, a work is no longer fixed, and separating idea from expression is no longer possible. The artificial distinction and the endless discussions about it have become superfluous.

The philosophical basis of the present copyright system is founded on a misunderstanding, notably that of the sheer boundless originality of the artist. One always builds on the labours of predecessors and contemporaries. Subsequent artists add something to the existing corpus of work, nothing more and nothing less. We may respect and admire such additions, but it would be incorrect to provide a creative or performing artist, or his or her producers, with an exclusive, monopolistic claim to something that has sprung largely from knowledge and creativity in the public domain, and that is indebted in important respects to the labours of predecessors. That knowledge and creativity which the artist adds to the public domain can be very impressive (or banal). It is quite a stretch to extend to the artist an exclusive, monopolistic property right for that addition, guaranteed until 70 years after his or her death and, on top of that, transferable to an individual or a corporation that had nothing to do with the creative process in the first place. The credibility of the system really starts to fall apart when we realize that the author and his or her rightful claimants can forbid almost anything that resembles the copying of 'their' work.

Artists must be prepared to delve into the public domain in order to find a supply of artistic materials on which to build. That road will be closed when artistic materials from present and past fall into private hands, something that is occurring to an increasing extent under the present copyright system. This privatization of our past and present cultural heritage is devastating for the development of our cultural life. In fact, an 'author-centred regime can actually slow down scientific progress, diminish the opportunities for creativity, and curtail the availability of new products'.

For cultural conglomerates, which control the bulk of property rights worldwide, the possibility of forbidding reproduction is exceptionally interesting: it enables them to dominate artistic expression without resistance, counter-melody, or counter-image – in short, without having to tolerate dialogue. Yet, we have to realize that in every democratic society a surplus of opinionated and emotion-evoking claims can be contradicted. The broad copyright – as we know and have it – virtually renders that contradiction difficult and sometimes impossible.

Alternatives?

The need has developed to investigate alternative ways to protect the public domain of knowledge and creativity, and to assure many artists and other cultural entrepreneurs a fair income for their labours. Recently, a few scholars and policymakers presented alternatives to the system. However, their proposals have many disadvantages and do not constitute a real alternative to the copyright regime.

The most far-reaching changes have appeared in systems like the General Public License and the Creative

Commons. The idea behind such constructs is that A's work must be available to others, who can use it without being obstructed by prevailing copyright but who cannot appropriate the work. The Creative Commons describes a situation in which A supplies some kind of public licence for his or her work: you may do what you please with my work, as long as you do not bring the work under a regime of private ownership. The work is thus subjected to a form of 'empty' copyright. This 'hollow' copyright constitutes the most extreme option the author has under the Creative Commons regime. More often, however, the author opts for the choice 'some rights reserved', stipulating, for example that the usage of a work be restricted to not-for-profit activities. It is an unclear form of contract law that is sure to keep lawyers busy. The sympathetic aspect of Creative Commons-like constructions is that they make it possible, to a certain extent, to withdraw from the copyright jungle. We hope that more and more artists will renounce and dismantle the copyright system by embracing the idea of Creative Commons. This is undoubtedly a system of benefit to museums and archives that wish to open their store of cultural heritage to the public, while also preventing it from being copyrighted or used inappropriately.

As long as the copyright system is in place, the Creative Commons appears to be a useful solution that may even serve as an exemplar. The Creative Commons does not paint a clear picture of how a diverse set of artists from all over the world, along with their producers and patrons, might generate an income. It is an issue that has to be resolved. Most artists will not dare to put the existing copyright regime to rest until they have been offered a clear view of a better alternative – even though the present regime does not offer anything substantial. A second drawback of Creative Commons-like approaches is their failure to question and challenge the copyright system in a fundamental way. Nonetheless, the Creative Commons License suggests that the author does want to exercise some form of control. A third essential objection to the Creative Commons-like approaches is that they involve only those artists who are willing to adhere to this philosophy. Cultural conglomerates, which own the biggest portions of our cultural heritage, will not be among them. It is a conclusion that downgrades and limits the attractive idea of the Creative Commons. Paradoxically, one of the most outspoken advocates of the Creative Commons, Lawrence Lessig, strongly champions the idea that knowledge and creativity can be owned as individual property, while he gave the title *Free Culture*[5] to the book in which he laid out the foundation for the Creative Commons movement.

5. Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture. How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), XIV, XVI, 10, 28, 83.

A second alternative for copyright is connected to various forms of art created and produced in a collective manner (traditional and contemporary work alike), as is the case in most non-Western countries. The individual approach inherent in the Western copyright system does not correspond to the more collective character of creation and performance

found in non-Western societies. If one stays within the paradigm of the private ownership of knowledge and creativity, a concept such as *collective* ownership obviously comes to mind. Is it not possible to grant so-called 'traditional' societies a tool that resembles copyright but is, in fact, collectively owned? Would this not enable them to protect their artistic expressions from inappropriate use and/or to guarantee their artists an income?

The problems involved in effectively introducing a system of collective intellectual ownership rights are abundant. One may wonder, for instance, who represents and is able to speak on behalf of the community. It is not necessarily the case that everybody agrees on how to deal with artistic creations, past or present. Copyright is about the exploitation of works, but many people in non-Western societies may consider the idea a blasphemy, while others do not want to see their creations being shown in specific contexts. Even without considering the position of Western cultural conglomerates, we have no problem understanding why the polite, weak and rather bleak attempts made to develop a collective intellectual property system have failed thus far.

Can tweaking the current system solve the problems as we have described them? Several scholars critical of the present copyright system propose optimizing it. Their contributions vary. Some argue for the re-establishment of the fair-use principle, which has suffered enormously over the last decade, or for making copyright applicable solely to real authors, creators and performers. Others favour a much shorter period of protection, such as 14 years. Still others, who compare the Anglo-Saxon copyright system with its European counterpart, believe there is no real problem in the European context, where a portion of copyright earnings is put aside for cultural projects and where distribution schemes favour individual artists. Unfortunately, bringing the current system back to normal proportions is unthinkable, because it is not in the interest of the main partners of the system, and the cultural conglomerates would never support such a move. On the contrary, they have been very eager and highly successful in extending and broadening the copyright system.

Moreover, digitization is having a huge impact on how the system functions. At what point must a society decide that when almost everybody is participating in an 'illegal' practice – like P2P music or film exchange – that practice can no longer be considered illegal? And even if European countries use copyright earnings more ethically than nations that enforce the Anglo-Saxon copyright system, the problem of the individual appropriation of knowledge and creativity, which is the basis of our critique of the latter, continues to exist.

Artists, Producers and Patrons: Entrepreneurs

Before presenting our proposal, we must state that artists are inclined to sell their work on the market and – if everything goes as planned – to make a living for themselves. They live off an acquisitive audience that admires, enjoys, and buys their products. Hence artists, as well as their producers and patrons, are appar-

ently entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship requires a risk-taker's mentality and a competitive spirit, assuming that real competition does indeed exist for both artists and the products that express their art. Copyright renders a product exclusive and provides the entrepreneur with a de facto monopoly. This system of institutionally protected gifts seems bizarre in an era in which even cultural conglomerates herald the blessings of free-market competition. Major entrepreneurs in cultural sectors bargain for ever-stricter intellectual property rights in the form of extensions and expansions of existing copyright legislation, but this is completely at odds with the so-called 'rule of the free market'. We observe the same phenomenon in the area of patent law and of other intellectual-property laws, such as trademarks, database rights, plant-breeder's rights and industrial design rights.

How can we identify the revival of the impulse to create? One possibility is that a work is commissioned. The second option is that the artist takes the initiative in making an artistic work, possibly in collaboration with one or more artists and/or performers in the same or in various creative disciplines. Third, a producer can be a binding factor and bear the responsibility and risk involved in an artistic venture. In all three cases, one person or a client assumes responsibility and accountability from the beginning for creating or performing a certain artistic work. To be responsible and accountable implies the undertaking of not only a broad range of activities that give the artistic project momentum, but also the burden of, among other things, the financial risks involved. The initiator becomes an entrepreneur and assumes the risk that unavoidably comes with entrepreneurship. In our alternative for copyright, it is not the artist who takes centre stage but the entrepreneur, regardless of whether he or she is an artist, a patron, or a producer.

Another System

The core of our position is based on a rejection of the present copyright system. As stated, the protective shield of property rights that has been artificially erected around a creative work will disappear. As a consequence, the work – regardless of whether it involves a (new) creation or a performance – will have to be marketed, beginning at the moment of its announcement. We will elaborate on this idea later in the essay. What is essential is the competitive advantage gained by the entrepreneurial patron, artist or producer who creates or performs a work. This advantage renders additional protection unnecessary.

What we have at this point is a first-mover advantage. The first person to market a work can use the advantage to reap revenues. The entrepreneur has 'lead-time', the time between the placement of the order and the delivery of the goods ordered. What we propose is not completely new. In 1934, Plant stated 'that copyright encourages moral hazard in publishers (firms in the creative industries) without sufficiently rewarding authors (creators) who supply the creative input'. He believed that publishers should rely on the temporary monopoly of lead time to establish new products in

the market.[6] This lead time gives the first mover an advantage over possible competitors and the opportunity to skim the market for the new cultural product, to ask a good price for it, and to earn a return on the investment. After all, it will take several months before the same play or piece of music enjoys an opening night elsewhere, or before the same chair is manufactured in another location. It should be understood that the work is immediately part of the public domain; it can be used by others, and everybody is free to adapt the work creatively. The competitive advantage that most artists possess, in one form or other, lies at the very core of our new system. If such advantages are allowed and able to do their work, ancillary forms of protection, like copyright, will be unnecessary.

6. Towse, 'Copyright and Cultural Policy', op. cit. (note 3), 19.

Owing to digitization, however, the rebuttal to this argument might be that in reality lead-time is only a couple of minutes or perhaps hours. Still, there are works that can benefit from a competitive advantage. Apart from the first-mover advantage, many artists are able to add value or create advantages in other ways. In order to understand this, we should keep in mind that cultural production and distribution will change considerably after the abolishment of copyright. In the field of music, for instance, concerts and performances will become much more important, also as a source of income for the artists. Live performances, direct contact with an audience generates inimitable value. Even in the present era, performing qualities are of decisive importance to musicians who want long, lasting careers. Good performances give a musician a good reputation. Reputation creates value. Reputation has a signalling effect and indicates guaranteed quality. Customers – or, in this context, fans – are more loyal to and more willing to pay higher prices for cultural products from artists with good reputations. In a world without copyright, the service-related qualities of artistic works are much more important than individual products.

All artistic creations or performances belong to the public domain. Each work is derived from the commons and based on the works of predecessors and contemporaries. From the moment of conception, therefore, it takes its place in the public domain. We use the concepts 'public domain' and 'commons' without distinction, even though, legally speaking, there may be differences between the two concepts. We define 'public domain' or 'commons' as the space in any society that *belongs* to all of us and can be *used* by all of us. It is a misunderstanding to think that this is an unregulated space. Throughout history and in all societies, such communal spaces have been regulated in one way or another – on the conditions of its usage, for example. Our alternative proposal returns to the commons what has always belonged to it, but was privatized in previous centuries.

A New Cultural Market and a Level Playing Field

With the use of our new system, a new cultural market will emerge. When copyright is abolished, cultural conglomerates will lose their grip on the mass of products with which they determine

the circumstances of our cultural lives to an ever-increasing extent. They will be forced to relinquish control of huge chunks of the world's cultural markets. They will lose the monopolistic exclusivity of broad cultural areas as a result of two things: permission granted to everyone to exploit artistic materials unprotected by temporary usufruct and a complete lack of restrictions on the creative adaptation of works of art. These new conditions will remove the cultural conglomerates' rationale for making substantial investments in blockbusters, bestsellers and stars. After all, renewed respectability for creative adaptation and the disappearance of the current system of copyright will reduce the economic incentive to produce at the present scale. A cultural entrepreneur, on the other hand, will not be forbidden to invest millions of dollars or euros in a film, a game, a CD or a DVD, for example. That investment, however, will no longer be made behind an endless wall of protection.

Once again, room to manoeuvre in cultural markets will be available to a variety of entrepreneurs who will no longer be hidden from the public eye. Artists everywhere are more likely to find audiences for their creations and performances in a normal market that is not dominated by a few large players. In a normalized market, with equal opportunities for everyone, this demand for a variety of artistic expression can be fulfilled, thus increasing the capability of a varied flock of artists to extract a decent living from their endeavours.

We are not suggesting that X attach his or her name to Y's book or film and pretend to be the author of that work. Such an act is plain misrepresentation or fraud. If discovered, and discovery is inevitable, the lazy fraudster will receive his or her fair penalty in the court of public opinion; we do not need a copyright system to accomplish that. It is up to all of us to have the courage to publicly accuse artists of misrepresentation or fraud. We can do so only by remaining alert, however, and if we want to rid ourselves of the judgment of the courts, which have made us culturally lazy in the past, we must keep a keen eye on our cultural surroundings and critically discuss what we consider inappropriate use.

We find it quite feasible to have a flourishing cultural domain without the existence of a copyright system, a world in which many artists in both Western and non-Western countries can make a reasonable income from their labours. It is evident, though, that our completely new approach does not immediately eradicate all conceivable problems. If cultural enterprises can no longer control the market with copyright in hand, they must resort to a second protective mechanism, which they will attempt to apply with even greater force than is presently the case. That mechanism is a far-reaching control of the distribution and the promotion of cultural works already in their possession.

This control, too, must be limited. After all, from a democratic perspective, it is impermissible for a limited number of cultural giants to be able to determine the contents of artistic and cultural communication. Democracy is not the privilege of a few cultural conglomer-

ates. We need ownership and content regulations that can organize the cultural market in such a way that cultural diversity gets the best possible chance. First of all, there should not be dominant modes of distribution. It cannot be the case that a single owner dominates, controls or directs the market for music, films, or books. Vertical integration and other forms of cross ownership must be condemned.

Content regulations may take the form of diversity prescriptions. Here the word 'diversity' applies to genre, musicians' backgrounds and geographic diversity. Certain outlets will specialize in a specific genre, of course, and want to be known for it. These will also be subject to diversity prescription, albeit within the chosen genre. This type of regulation takes nothing away from a free-market economy. On the contrary, these rules, while in need of further elaboration, serve to create a free market, or, in other words, to 'normalize' the market and to bring about a level playing field. This is a market where all producers must follow the same rules and be subjected to equal opportunities. No one should be able to dominate the cultural market or to have such a strong position that cultural diversity will be suppressed, pushed aside, or removed from the public eye. The creation of an ideal situation demands not only the elimination of copyright as a control mechanism, but also the instalment of regulations on ownership and content that will protect and promote the flourishing of artistic diversity.

It should be obvious to all that I am trying to forge a free market for the production, distribution and promotion of cultural endeavours. A free market is a place where everybody has a more or less equal opportunity to access the market. It should be a *level playing field*. At the moment the market becomes unbalanced – a point at which certain forces assume a more dominant position – the imbalance should be corrected. Otherwise, the chances of free access to the market for every entrepreneur disappear. The basic principles of neo-liberalism, however, do not comprise market corrections as described here. As a result, and a rapid one at that, winner takes all. After all, on the market developed and regulated under WTO law, corporations and other businesses are able to grow without restriction and, consequently, to conquer any sort of competitor in any sort of market worldwide. This kind of market regulation favours the spectacular growth of globally operating cultural conglomerates, which trample existing cultural diversity and curtail the efforts of a multitude of creative sources to build and maintain an international network of cultural exchange.

To alter this undesirable situation, we must alter our thinking and the market must be organized and regulated in ways that differ from the existing practice – a practice, for that matter, which has been around for only a couple of decades. We must convince our fellow citizens that cultural diversity is a worthwhile objective and that it can be realized by forging a level playing field for artistic expression and for the cultural entrepreneurs, including artists, who are active in this field. A level playing field implies the abolishment of the protective shield of copyright and the introduction of

ownership and content-diversity regulations. Another facet of the proposed change concerns the rapid evolution of the Internet, a medium that proves how much more the world has to offer than the boring stuff cultural monopolists palm off on consumers. More and more people are refusing to be consumers and nothing else; they feel – and want to feel – like citizens that have something to say and that want to be able to influence supply. The struggle to (re)convert from consumer to citizen has begun in earnest. It's a movement worth joining.

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Willem van Weelden

The Stalemate of Net Criticism

'If you're explaining you're losing!'

Net criticism, by consistently employing a strategy of decentralization and un-organization ('becoming minor'), has become marginalized. How relevant can it continue to be from within its self-appointed ghetto? The ambiguous way in which net critics have responded to the ideas and actions of Lawrence Lessig, front man of the Free Culture movement and one of the initiators of Creative Commons, makes this question all the more urgent, argues Willem van Weelden in this polemical essay.

From the early days of the web, the vulnerability of this new public domain was discussed in anxious and sometimes in outright paranoid terms on online discussion forums like *Nettime*, in online magazines like *Suck* and *Feed*, or in the Californian 'net glossy' *Wired*. A pattern seemed to emerge from these discussions: the greater the expectations of the democratic potential of this social experiment, the deeper the anxiety and the more emphatic the warnings. Net criticism evolved as a new type of criticism of society and technology with roots in the hacker movement, cyberpunk, techno art, do-it-yourself media and media activism. Net criticism was also the quintessential expression of media freedom and a refusal to compromise with, in post-Orwellian terms, 'the System'. Based on a conviction that there is no conceivable alternative to the devastating logic of globalization and that the nation-state is definitively on its way out, net criticism became a awareness-raising instrument that derived its tactics from the dictum of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: 'becoming minor'. The historical but above all horrifying tragedies of 'the Left', including the nightmare of Soviet Bloc communism, had to be avoided. This resulted in a tactic of self-chosen 'minority' and a deliberate refusal to institutionalize. 'Tactical media activism' became the embodiment of a new, subversive online practice, from which a free culture would emerge. The process of institutional reform had to be accelerated, without resorting to the militant strategies of the past, which had attempted to bring capitalist society as a whole to its knees.[1]

The subjects and fronts of net criticism hybridized and mutated. From a resistance to an organized overall perspective emerged the critical ingredients of an activist virus that was to guarantee as efficient a destabilization of the capitalist and technological complex as possible. The creation of 'communities' with specific messages and expressions was intended to contribute to economic disruption and symbolic confusion – comparable to the strategies of the Situationists. Along with other new forms of civil disobedience, including 'hacking' and the activist use of 'spam', and using low-tech and open-source technology, this would form a real, difficult to combat threat to the 'establishment' – a typically 1970s term that survived in the rhetoric of net criticism.

This genre of tactical criticism seemed to receive a visible affirmation in 1999, with the spontaneous and unorganized mobilization of tens of thousands of 'alternative globalists' protesting in the streets of Seattle against the WTO summit. An affirmation seized upon by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt in their neo-Marxist book *Multitude* to lend credence to

1. 'Anti-copyright', the first chapter of *Electronic Civil Disobedience and Other Unpopular Ideas* by Critical Art Ensemble (Steve Kurtz; New York: Autonomedia, 1996), already includes a historical analysis of media activism campaigns and resistance and formulates a call for a new course and a moderation of the campaigns: 'Today acts of civil disobedience (CD) are generally intended to hasten institutional reform rather than bring about national collapse, since this style of resistance allows the possibility of negotiation.' Later, however, he writes, 'The option of realizing hacker fantasies of a new avant-garde, in which a class of technocratic resistors acts on behalf of "the People", seems every bit as suspect, although it is not as fantastic as thinking that the people of the world will unite.' (p. 8). For the online version of *Electronic Civil Disobedience* see http://www.critical-art.net/books/ecd/.

their renewed faith in processes of democratization.[2] Yet in their refusal to institutionalize the resistance and the liberation struggle, the early 'cyber militants' relinquished the opportunity for an open and meaningful confrontation with 'the System' to others. In many cases, organizations like the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), which fought, in federal and 'corporate' America, to establish online civil rights and safeguard the Internet from commercial excess and restrictive regulation, had to do the dirty work.[3] The net activists engaged in wide-ranging discussions were lacking in scope and pragmatic focus.

A consensus did exist among the disparate groups on the evolution of the new-born Internet into a sanctuary of 'user-friendly interfaces': this manipulated users more into the position of consumers than that it assisted them in becoming conscious, critical and above all responsible 'netizens'. Yet a threat to the 'establishment' and a definitive democratization or even 'abolition of the media', something net critic Geert Lovink still passionately advocated at one of the first *Nettime* conferences, has so far failed to materialize.[4] What went wrong with net criticism and the tactical use of media?

Even after various self-critical revisions of its assumptions, necessitated by the explosive commercial development of the Internet and compelling historical events, the movement of 'net critics' has been able to do little to actually safeguard the creative freedom of the use of content on the Internet for all its users. The net critics primarily prevailed within their own movement. In hindsight, the tactic of 'becoming minor', for net criticism and its alternative artistic networks, perhaps led mostly to a self-created ghetto, the size and importance of which became steadily more dependent on the 'junk space' allowed it by the spectre of capitalism. Net criticism has since been forced to concede that 'the strategy of becoming "minor" (Guattari) is no longer a positive choice, but the "default option".'[5]

2. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude, War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

3. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les mains sales* (1948). The Electronic Frontier Foundation, set up in 1990 by John Perry Barlow, Esther Dyson, John Gilmore, et al., fought from the beginnings of the Internet for digital civil rights by filing lawsuits against the US government and big corporations. EFF operates thanks to donations from consumers and citizens. Lawrence Lessig has been a member of the EFF's board of directors from some time. See also www.eff.org/.

4. See also the reader of the fifth *Cyber Conference*, Madrid, June 1996: 'The Importance of Being Media'. Media theorist and critic Geert Lovink's writings include *Uncanny Networks* (2002), *Dark Fiber* (2002) and *My First Recession* (2003).

5. Geert Lovink and Florian Schneider, *A Virtual World is Possible: From Tactical Media to Digital Multitudes*, October 2002: 'Most movements and initiatives find themselves in a trap. The strategy of becoming "minor" (Guattari) is no longer a positive choice but the default option. Designing a successful cultural virus and getting millions of hits on your weblog will not bring you beyond the level of a short-lived "spectacle". Culture jammers are no longer outlaws but should be seen as experts in guerrilla communication. Today's movements are in danger of getting stuck in self-satisfying protest mode. With access to the political process effectively blocked, further mediation seems the only available option. However, gaining more and more "brand value" in terms of global awareness may turn out to be like overvalued stocks: it might pay off, it might turn out to be worthless.' This article is available at http://laudanum.net/geert/, which also features such relevant texts as *Net Criticism 2.0*, *Network criticism in times of an e-Goldrush*, *Tulipomania*, *Tactical Media after 9/11*.

'What Have YOU Done about It?'

Attorney and Free Culture advocate Lawrence Lessig, described by *The New Yorker* as 'the most important thinker on intellectual property in the Internet era', was one of the founders, in 2001, of Creative Commons, an initiative to provide the legal foundations for new concepts of copyrights, reuse and the sharing of information.[6] According to Lessig we no longer live in a free culture, but in a 'permission culture'. He sounded the alarm about this in 2004, with his book *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity*.[7] Lessig argues that never before has creative progress been legally controlled in totalitarian fashion by a mere handful of powerful interests, the so-called 'Big Media'. It is indeed shocking to realize that through legislative reform, often under the guise of adapting to new technologies, nations are increasingly exercising top-down control of creativity and innovation. Freedom of expression, a free market and antitrust prohibitions are achievements enshrined in national constitutions; this implies that what is now taking place actually violates fundamental constitutional guarantees.

6. Creative Commons licences allow creators to release their copyrighted work for certain forms of reuse without giving up the protection provided by the copyright. Several licences have been developed for this purpose and are available to the public for free on the Internet. See http://www.creativecommons.org. For the Free Culture movement, see also http://freeculture.org/.

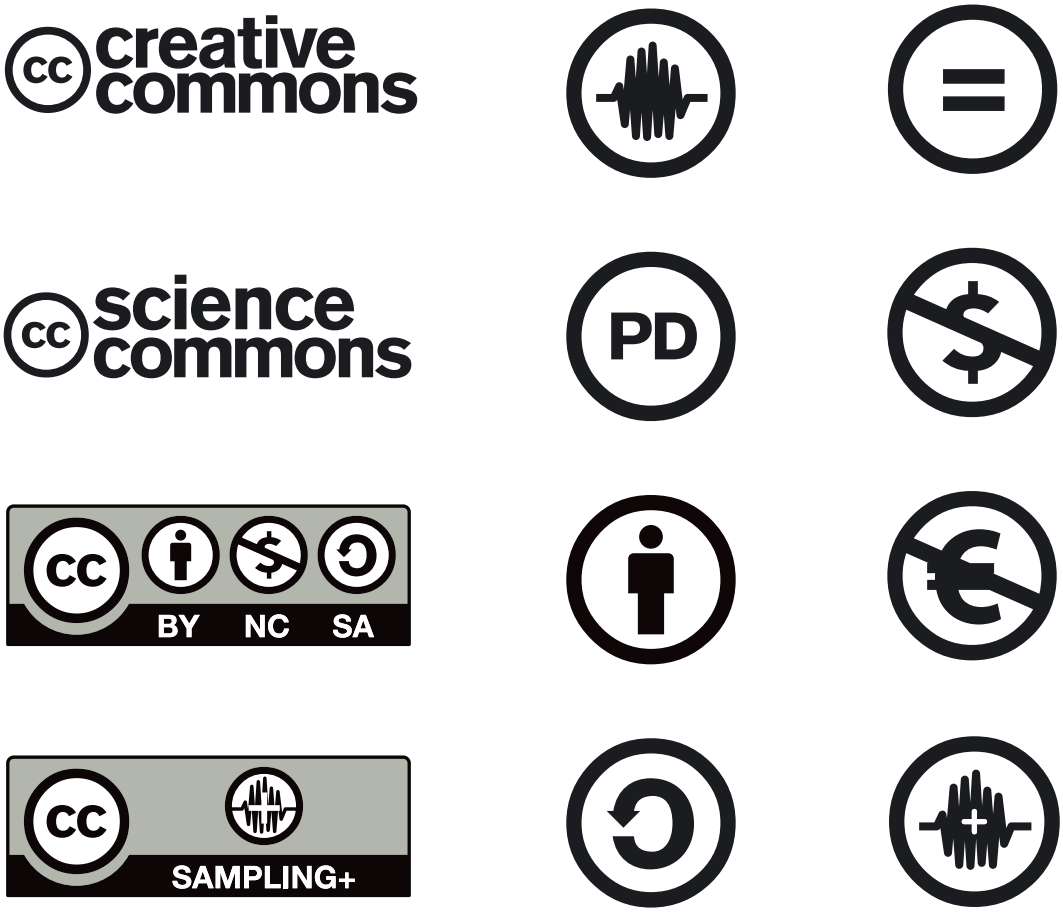
7. Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity* (New York: Penguin, 2004). This is also available as an open text at http://www.free-culture.cc/ with the alternative subtitle of *How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity*. See also Lessig's website: http://www.lessig.org/blog/.

Using myriad examples, Lessig demonstrates that the natural 'flow' of creativity is being controlled and coded into law purely in the interest of a small collection of media giants, establishing a cultural regime without equal. In *Free Culture* he also deals extensively with his own involvement as legal counsel in the *Eldred v. Ashcroft* case, in which his client, Eric Eldred, a co-founder of Creative Commons, challenged the 1998 Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act (CTEA) as unconstitutional before the US Supreme Court. The CTEA guarantees copyright protection for the duration of the life of a work's creator plus 70 years. This case, which he eventually lost, was of great strategic significance to Lessig. Copyright legislation had of course been substantially expanded on various occasions, but Lessig, who argued for Eldred, saw the CTEA as an ultimate sledgehammer blow. Creative works, protected by copyrights of extreme duration, would henceforth be effectively kept out of the public domain for all eternity.[8] The CTEA, Lessig argued, represented a serious threat to the creative innovation of culture, which needs to be able to build on previously created work.

8. The Copyright Term Extension Act extended copyright terms for works by natural persons from the life of the author plus 50 years to the life of the author plus 70 years and for works of corporate authorship from 75 years to 95 years. See also http://www.eldred.cc/eldredvashcroft.html.

As part of his argument, Lessig proposed a compromise, in which he called for the levying of an annual, symbolic tax of $1 for the use of a copyrighted work for a period of 50 years. He wanted to limit the power of

Creative Commons, some symbols and buttons.
http://creativecommons.org/presskit



big corporations by filtering copyrights devoid of any commercial importance out of the equation (in other words, 'if I as the author of a work am not able to get anything more out of this work than that $50, there is no point in needlessly copyrighting this work for a much longer period'). With this Lessig aimed to assure free access to what culture produces and offers in all its diversity. The current undiminished regulation enacted by the CTEA in the USA is effectively producing a McCarthyesque regime of paranoia, insofar as it concerns the protection of the copyright interests of an extremely limited subsection of the cultural industry.

The negative outcome of *Eldred v. Ashcroft* spurred Lessig to assess his mistakes in a public self-critique.[9] He blamed himself for having lost this crucial case by having made it too much of a question of principle and having been insufficiently pragmatic in his arguments. In an era in which the US Supreme Court rules unilaterally in favour of prevailing monopolists based on economic interests rather than issues of constitutional principle, Lessig had no chance. In short, he found his approach, one year on, too scholarly and too principle-based. In this he did not deny the principle aspect of the case, but he regretted, in retrospect, that as a constitutional scholar he had not opted for a much more business-like approach, with which he might have been able to strike a significant blow for a 'Free Culture'.

9. Lawrence Lessig, *How I lost the Big One*, http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/March-April-2004/story_lessig_marapr04.msp.

Before this defeat, Lessig gave a speech at the O'Reilly Open Source Convention (OSCON) in 2002, in which he not only made a direct appeal to his audience by posing the rhetorical question 'What have YOU done about it?', but also significantly used a widely circulated aphorism by former Republican Congressman J.C. Watts: 'If you're explaining you're losing' – Watts made the comment in 2002 to justify his decision to leave Congress after seven years, arguing that to explain and theorize is sometimes to admit defeat.[10] If only his demonstrated insight into the degeneration of American democracy had inspired Lessig more during the Eldred case! His quoting of Watts's dictum, after all, was an acknowledgement that the climate within which democratic agreement must be achieved is becoming increasingly cynical. It has long ceased to be about being right in substance, but about whether something can be grasped in a face-value judgement: 'If you're explaining you're losing'. And Lessig lost.

10. This speech is available as a Flash presentation on the Internet: http://randomfoo.net/oscon/2002/lessig/).

The Ideological Boomerang of a 'Free Culture'

The proposition on copyright regulation that Lessig used to try to win the Eldred case brought him and his Creative Commons initiative a great deal of criticism as to its economic and ideological implications. Free Culture comrades such as David Berry and Giles Moss, as well as Joost Smiers, who is represented in this *cahier*, and certain net critics felt that Lessig's alternative

plans would be counterproductive: his licensing scheme would in fact harm the interests of the 'poor' and accommodate those of the big corporations.[11] Neither could the ideological basis upon which Creative Commons is based count on their approval: the 'commons' of Creative Commons, they said, did not embody any genuine 'communality'; it was an artificial and above all naïve construct. The project would be no match for the existing, profit-obsessed economics of copyrights, which, in contrast to the Creative Commons licences, are supported by federal intellectual property rights legislation.

11. David M. Berry & Giles Moss, 'The Politics of the Libre Commons', in: *First Monday*, volume 11, no. 9, 4 September 2006, http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_9/

Lessig's riposte was that a regulatory scheme enacted by Congress could not claim the democratic critique and social correction of the Eldred case or Creative Commons: these are initiatives by concerned citizens who seek justice, a grass-roots effort to restore the democratic balance by supplementing a unilaterally abused legislation with alternatives! Therefore what he is calling for is an ideological 'boomerang', a non-politicized, 'democratic' right that must be defended precisely within the limits provisionally left open by the present system. And this makes it a fully 'constitutionally protected' form of civil resistance against the illegitimate use of federal legislation by big corporations!

So it was indeed the 'free nature' of the public domain that Lessig had in mind with his tactics. Moreover, the plans of Creative Commons did provide for a subsequent phase, in which a renewed legislative effort can take place once a general awareness about the curtailment of civil liberties in the realm of intellectual property rights has been established. Such reform, in Lessig's view, can be introduced much more easily when buttressed by a broad societal consensus than when based on elitist or activist righteousness.

There appears to have been little response within the *Nettime* mailing list in 2001 to the Creative Commons initiative and the 'civil obedience' front advocated by Lessig. Perhaps because the nondescript Stanford professor Lessig, with his Republican antecedents, lacks the critical 'appeal' associated in net criticism circles with someone who can make a substantial contribution to free culture. Net criticism prefers to rally round the 'punk appeal' of hacker *avant la lettre* Richard Stallman, crusader of free software and the free operating system GNU.[12] Stallman's compelling 'tone of voice' and looks are like those of freedom fighter 'Grutte Pier' in the Dutch children's TV series *Floris*.

12. See http://www.stallman.org/.

That the tactics of net criticism have adapted to the issues of the day and to the latest manifestations of our capitalist system does not alter the fact that this form of 'horizontal' criticism apparently must remain cloaked in the style of icons from an illustrious, but also unsuccessful, past. A past from which, out of tactical urgency, they must nevertheless manage to escape. It is all the more clear that genuinely free content comes at the expense of the aesthetics of the argument. The

fact that the safeguarding of a free culture is not actually served by this is apparently accepted as the dues of the dream of a 'great cultural offensive' in which 'freedom' as pure substance is the metaphysical culmination of all of history. 'Becoming minor' is no longer a strategy: it smacks of insignificance. The refrain Lessig included in his OSCON presentation to encapsulate the essence of his Free Culture philosophy is implicitly a response to this inability to shake off the hold of the past:

— Creativity always builds on the past
— The past always tries to control the creativity that builds on it
— Free societies enable the future by limiting the past
— Ours is less and less a free society

Pascal Gielen

Artistic Freedom and Globalization

Many culture and art critics have pointed to the negative impact of globalization on the art world over the last decade. As this concept has been linked to a variety of phenomena such as 'commodification', mediatization and uniformization, it has become heterogeneous and anaemic. Sociologist Pascal Gielen attempts to clarify the relationship between globalization and all the evils ascribed to it. In order to give art a renewed role in inspiring reflection, he calls for the creation of a free zone in which globalization is accepted in all its complexity.

For a work of art to be considered 'a good work of art', it should preferably be created within an autonomous free zone. As Luc Boltanski and Laurant Thévenot put it, this means that in the creative process, only an artistic value system should be taken into account.[1] Considerations of a commercial or political – and sometimes even legal – nature are unthinkable. 'Commercial' is also probably the most commonly used term of opprobrium in art criticism. Pierre Bourdieu in fact based his sociology of art to a large extent on the distinction between the commercial and the non-commercial, or as he put it between the 'short-term and long-term market'.[2] A *genuine* artist renounces transient financial profit seeking, we are told. Those who hope to make any claim of greatness in the art world should only concern themselves with artistic questions. These questions, according to Arthur Danto, were defined, far into the nineteenth century, by a linear development, namely a quest for as truthful a representation of reality as possible.[3] Only when the dominance of the aristocracy and the church weakened, and the academy was forced to put away its collective system of rules, did anything like artistic freedom or autonomy emerge. Art got the chance to focus entirely on itself, so goes the familiar story of art history. In the jargon of sociology, and more specifically that of systems theory, this is referred to as the art world 'functionally differentiating itself' and taking its place as an autopoetic reality alongside the law, economics, politics, etcetera.[4]

1. L. Boltanski and L. Thévenot, *De la justification. Les économies de la grandeur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991).

2. P. Bourdieu, 'La production de la croyance: contribution à une économie des biens symboliques' in: *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales,* 13, 1977; P. Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

3. A. Danto, *The philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

This is the universally accepted story of modernity. However, it is also (thanks to Kant, among others) the origin of the idea of 'pure' art: an artefact that solely serves aesthetic pleasure and thus otherwise floats, free, in a social vacuum. Yet according to the critique of many sociologists, including yours truly, this pure art has never existed. The loss of the aristocracy and the church have in fact turned the artistic artefact, within both the modern and late-modern condition, into a heterogeneous jumble. The democratization of society has allowed anyone and everyone to claim the artwork, which means it is political *and* economic *and* legal *and* pedagogical, and of course artistic as well.[5] More, in fact: the autonomy of the work of art, like artistic freedom, is guaranteed within this heterogeneous arena. It is precisely *because* an artefact is produced with politically stipulated subsidies, is purchased by a well-to-do collector, is legally protected and secures intellectual property rights, is featured in schoolbooks and constitutes an artistic answer to an artistic problem, that the artwork becomes firmly anchored as an artwork and that it can claim a right to artistic autonomy. Moreover, the more heterogeneous the network

4. N. Luhmann, *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995); N. Luhmann, 'Ausdifferenzierung der Kunst', Institut für soziale Gegenwartsfragen Freiburg I. Br. und Kunstraum Wien (ed.), *Art & Language & Luhmann* (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 1997), 133-148; N. Luhmann, 'Die Autonomie der Kunst', Institut für soziale Gegenwartsfragen Freiburg I. Br. und Kunstraum Wien (ed.), *Art & Language & Luhmann* (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 1997), 177-190.

5. P. Gielen, *Kunst in Netwerken. Artistieke selecties in de hedendaagse dans en de beeldende kunst* (Leuven: LannooCampus, 2003).

to which the object belongs, the more performative the latter becomes. The object is elevated to the status of a quasi-subject or of a semi-social actor capable of setting the most diverse of actors into motion. If, for instance, someone were to deface *The Nightwatch* with a knife tomorrow, this act would activate a gigantic network of curators, politicians, insurers, attorneys, critics, and so forth.

The consideration of the artwork not as a pure object, but as an 'and-and-object' – which admittedly derives significantly from Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (hereafter ANT)[6] – is crucial to any discussion in the art world about marketization, 'commodification', etcetera. It shows, for example, that a so-called commercial artwork is still an artwork because it continues to 'network' – albeit minimally – with the artistic value system. Should it cease to do so, it is simply no longer an artwork. It is reduced to mere consumer item or property. This is why, among other things, it is vital that an artwork from a private collection be regularly exhibited in a museum or art centre. Or that it at least be featured in a few catalogues. This preserves its connection to the art world and maintains its status as a work of art. Of course an artistic product can be more 'commercial', but it can also be more political than artistic (although this is particularly difficult to assess). It is important that the artwork be continually appropriated, or in ANT terms, 'wrapped up' by other network configurations and thus by other value systems as well. Everything depends on which actors connect with the work and how it continues to 'network' (or not). Armed with this view of the artwork, the debate on globalization and a growing 'commodification' of artistic space can be observed.

6. B. Latour, *Wij zijn nooit modern geweest. Pleidooi voor een symmetrische antropologie* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1994).

Globalization

To begin by getting a clear picture of globalization, the best thing to do is to look back at history. Marshall McLuhan, after all, came up with the clearest definition back in 1964, with the universally renowned metaphor of 'The Global Village'.[7] Primarily as a result of a rapid global dissemination of electronic mass media, the theorist saw the emergence of a world like a village. In this he mainly focused on communication networks, which can spread the same news around the world as quickly as a piece of gossip circulates around a local community. If we now pick apart this metaphor a bit more, we can observe that, in concrete terms, globalization consists of a shrinking of space and time.[8] Today in Rotterdam, for instance, we're about three hours' travel time from Paris, which gives us an entirely different sense of space from that of our ancestors in, say, the late Middle Ages. Ever-greater distances are being bridged with ever-greater speed. While world travel and trade already existed two centuries ago, the difference is in the tremendous speed with which this happens today. This creates a sense of 'instantaneousness'.[9] What is known here can essentially be known on the other side of the globe within seconds. What

7. M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964).

8. See, among others: J. Urry, *Sociology beyond Societies* (London: Routlegde, 2000).

9. Ibid.

is more, an event on another continent can have a rapid and profound impact on our actions within our own familiar environment. A well-known example is the virtually instantaneous effect on the American and European economies as a result of the transfer of huge populations from the Chinese countryside to the cities. The global 'meshwork' of networks is like a hyperkinetic nervous system. This is precisely where the difference with the international networks of a few centuries ago lies. Globalization today is primarily to do with speed.

Effects on the Art World

Fast-moving global flows generate a vast array of transformations. A concrete and striking example for the art world is intensive global mediatization. This has led to the emergence of an attention regime that seeks out the new at ever-greater speed. Art movements evaporate in trends and 'hyped-up' exhibition concepts in rapid succession. Art production and presentation too have become, in other words, 'instantaneous'.[10] Moreover, needless to say, the artistic landscape is getting more colourful. In their compulsive search for the new, internationally operating curators scour virtually every region of the world. Eastern Europe had its turn with the fall of the Berlin Wall, Africa soon followed and now China is 'in'. Whether this phenomenon presages a truly symmetrical and polyphonous arts landscape or a new Western cultural imperialism, we won't go into here. What matters is that these expansions have led to a gigantic accumulation of products. And we have to take the word 'product' seriously here. In spite of the rhetoric about process in the 1990s, it is primarily the artistic result that has taken centre stage. Ultimately there has to be something to look at, or something to buy. The process itself, for that matter, has also become a product (for exhibition). Under the pressure of the attention regime, the art world has indeed become highly 'commodified'. Because everything must operate quickly, free zones, devoted to development, are coming under pressure.[11] An in-depth discussion about an artistic development, a serious public debate about a work of art or a thorough essay about an oeuvre become secondary, because they take up time. Nevertheless, it is precisely such painstakingly argued reasoning that distinguishes an artistic or cultural object from a consumer good. The more words and arguments are expended on an artefact, the better it becomes anchored in the public space. Those who exhibit or buy contemporary art without arguments not only reduce the artwork to a consumer good, but also deny it a place in the public debate.

If on top of that national political institutions withdraw from the scene because they no longer understand very much about these globalized, idiosyncratic artistic flows, the artistic work loses its previously described and necessary heterogeneity. The artefact gets out of balance and becomes primarily a consumer good, or else it is degraded to a purely artistic object, because it is only understood within an internationally operating peer group of art specialists. Let

10. P. Gielen and R. Laermans, *Een omgeving voor actuele kunst. Een toekomstperspectief voor het beeldende-kunstenlandschap in Vlaanderen* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2004).

11. Ibid.

us be clear about this: an in-crowd of art experts is indispensable for the continued development of the art world. An unevolved arts policy, however, is forcing this group ever further into isolation, making it ever more difficult for them to connect to a broader public debate. The result is that even higher-educated people with broad cultural interests also turn away.

This result is related to a second effect of globalization. For institutionalized speed also sucks a great deal of intimacy out of the public space in which the artistic might flourish. Indeed, today's public space is too focused on popular entertainment and consumer use, leaving no room for exchanges of ideas and reflection. This more 'intimate space' is reserved for the previously mentioned international peer group or for the private sphere of the collector. The multiplying global artistic flows cause the artistic landscape to change rapidly, making it difficult for those with broad cultural interests to follow the discourse about art. With the advent of modernity, an artistic movement would come along to replace the preceding one – roughly – every ten years, but again, today this happens much faster.

Combined with an enormous accumulation of artistic products (and artists) this continually produces more 'objective culture', as the German sociologist Georg Simmel puts it. With this notion, he was referring, back in the late nineteenth century, to a culture that is alien to us or that becomes alienated from us.[12] Human hands may generate artistic products, but at some point these escape, and the distance becomes too great. They become alienated from our own 'subjective culture'. This phenomenon generates the sense that they can no longer be appropriated, because the key to specific artistic codes is gone. And yet, Simmel argues in a highly inspiring dialectic concept, we need this objective culture. Indeed we must literally get through it in order to create our own subjective culture. To put it more fashionably in ANT jargon: the artist is always outside himself; without external connections an artistic identity, however idiosyncratic, is simply not possible. Indeed it is in the individual and eclectic tinkering with objective cultures that a subjective culture takes shape. But this can only take place in intimate public spaces, meaning primarily zones of inertia that temporarily slow down these global flows, giving the viewer the time to understand a work. They are places where he gets relevant explanations or can read up as necessary.

12. G. Simmel, *Een keuze uit het werk van Georg Simmel* (Deventer: Van Loghum Slaterus, 1976).

It is fairly self-evident that blockbuster exhibitions, rapidly touring expositions or short-lived art-tourism events lack this inertia. It is in fact up to the government to create or support these 'intimate zones' in order to subsequently channel global flows within them, but more on that later. When this fails to happen, contemporary global developments remain mainly the preserve of an in-crowd, but more to the point, even local artists are likely to turn away. Due to a lack of instruments for an international connection, they remain local, by which we mean also merely national or provincial.

Finally, we can point to yet another effect of globalization, one that sociologists refer to as the 'de-differentiation of functional subsystems'. The idea is that a

society is divided into different systems, each of which has a specific function in the society, like economics, politics, the law, education, the arts, etcetera. Rather than speak of 'functional subsystems', however, we write here, following the lead of Boltanski and Thévenot, of different 'value regimes'.[13] The reason for this transformation is an issue of theoretical technique, as well as a discussion among sociologists we had better not expand upon here. The point is that different values apply in economics than in politics, law, art, etcetera. Depending on the value regime, one must also consider other criteria if one is to 'make it'. As everyone knows, economics is primarily about accumulating money. This is something different from accumulating power in the political arena, or issuing just verdicts within the legal system.

13. See note 1.

What might be highly valued within the economic or political regime – Boltanski and Thévenot speak of 'grandeur' – need not necessarily be so in artistic terms. This is why, for instance, many artists live in poverty, something the Dutch economist and artist Hans Abbing once pointed out.[14] Many artists reject immediate profit-seeking and it is precisely why they enjoy a certain status in the art world. Bourdieu advocated this idea back in the 1970s. What matters is that there are different value regimes, and therefore divergent value hierarchies. Under the pressure of globalization, the boundaries between these regimes are beginning to 'de-differentiate'. This does not mean that they are vanishing, but that they are shifting, being renegotiated or redefined. The best-known example is the direct effect of the rise of globally operating multinationals within the economic regime on national labour policy. What is considered important by business leaders on the one hand and political leaders on the other is, simply put, being renegotiated and revised. In other words, value hierarchies are constantly reordered, or they can also merge into a new hybrid regime. In regard to the latter, think for instance of the rise of the creative industry as a melting pot of artistic and economic values. But more than two value regimes can be combined, too.

14. H. Abbing, *Why Are Artists Poor? The Exceptional Economy of the Arts* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002).

Back to the arts landscape: consider the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. This museum of American origin was recruited, paradoxically enough, by a nationalist party as a way to proclaim the Basque identity in opposition to Spain. Moreover, it now serves not only as a lure for many domestic and foreign tourists, but also for high-tech companies to fill a new Silicon Valley. So the art museum was not simply built to exhibit artistic work in optimal conditions – at the very least, political and economic considerations also came into play. The striking architecture, moreover, was intended to give Bilbao a globally recognized identity. Again, the paradox is that this was done with the flagship of America and with an American/Canadian architect. So identity can be purchased, and other cultures can also serve to give one's 'own' culture a recognized identity. As the political and economic regime took over, the artistic regime was relegated to the background, and the Guggenheim now has few relevant connections to the global contemporary art network. Its heterogeneity is out

of balance. It is hardly nurturing a healthy local art scene, nor is it creating links between local artists and global networks. The costly (art) investments thus merely stimulate an international artistic anchorage, still propped up to a certain extent by the Guggenheim collection. The actual international flows that crisscross the building belong to entirely different value regimes. The artistic space here is, at the very least, severely circumscribed.

Guaranteeing Free Space: Four Positions

Within the globalization debate, four different positions can be identified.[15] These can be distilled into four attitudes that may be adopted by arts policymakers as well as artists and arts organizations. Each defines artistic free space in a different way, leading to the development of diverse strategies. For the record: nowhere in the existing literature has a connection been made between the four positions within the globalization debate, the art world and its 'commodification'. What follows is thus a speculative conceptual exercise, which might give rise to concrete proposals.

15. D. Held, A. Mcgrew, D. Goldblatt and J. Perraton, *Global Transformations. Politics, Economics and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

The so-called hyper-globalists adopt the first position. They view the economy, and more specifically the neo-liberal market, as the engine of the globalization process. Financial flows, in other words, form the foundation for other global shifts. Saskia Sassen's analyses, for instance, are predicated on these premises to a significant extent. What the sociologist absolutely does not share with the hyper-globalists, however, is the embrace of this process. To hyper-globalists, financial flows must always be completely unfettered. This means that cultural, political or legal obstacles should be removed as much as possible. Within this reasoning, art too is merely an instrument of the free market. The economic free space has thus been given priority over the artistic.

A globally operating arts network is of interest to the hyper-globalists only if it installs a standardized culture. If, for instance, a Dutchman and a Japanese both know Vincent van Gogh, and appreciate him to the same degree to boot, that might well promote healthy trade between the two. The Guggenheim strategy is thus completely legitimate for the hyper-globalists. Imposing the same collection all over the world, after all, evokes a shared cultural frame of reference, which can facilitate other exchanges. Globalization, from this standpoint, differs little from what used to be called 'Americanization' in the 1970s, but never mind.

Politicians who develop an arts policy based on this perspective will primarily support large-scale mediagenic art events. In addition, a highly visible arts infrastructure – think of many German museums, for instance – has to increase the appeal of specific sites. Within such conditions, therefore, there is scarcely any question of a free artistic space. Indeed, it is virtually taken over by other value regimes.

Anti-globalists adopt a second position. Although there is a great ideological difference between them and the hyper-globalists, they do share the economic frame of reference. Within it, paradoxically enough, neo-liberals and neo-Marxists find each other. Anti-globalists,

however, do everything in their power to limit the impact of global economic flows. In an almost protectionist attitude they try to shield the local culture and economy from foreign influences. Art becomes an instrument to display local identity, as frequently happens with art in the public space. In Flanders, for instance, we might point to the proliferation of public artworks erected at traffic junctions, which barely surpass local academicism. Anti-globalism easily gets bogged down in narrow 'localism'. Here, as with hyper-globalists, the local art scene has little connection to developments in the international professional art world.

Sceptics – the group that adopts the third position – belong to an entirely different camp. They distrust the hyped-up globalization rhetoric and argue that the nation-state still plays the most significant role, including in the global arena. One oft-cited example is the USA, a nation-state that sets much of the world agenda. In contrast to the hyper- and anti-globalists, sceptics emphasize not so much the economic, but the political value regime. National politics still determine to a large extent what happens inside and outside national borders. The artistic free zone must primarily be guaranteed within these borders. This can be done with generous subsidies to home-grown artists. The former BKR fine arts endowment in the Netherlands is a relevant example of such a 'national' policy, which incidentally should not be confused with ideological nationalism. An arts policy of this sort is primarily concerned with serving its own citizens, which is why it entails so much attention to public participation. Many government subsidies, after all, require solid political legitimacy, which in a democracy must still be obtained from the electorate.

Yet this approach, too, is ill-equipped to deal with global artistic flows. On the contrary, by placing such a heavy emphasis on public participation, the national art scene seems to be turning in on itself. After all, the first priority is to adequately supply the national market, so that the participation debate gets bogged down in numbers. There is little inquiry into how a somewhat broader and potentially interested audience might be brought into contact with global flows. Attention to the previously outlined 'intimate passages' is lacking. In this case, while there is an artistic free zone, it is insufficiently heterogeneous. The political value regime prevails over the economic value regime, providing little incentive to look beyond national borders.[16]

16. Not to be confused with the traditional Dutch 'pillar system' of party politics – the current political regime after all continually seeks its legitimacy in (unmediated) electoral support, for which it increasingly relies, via the media, on democratic populism.

For artists as well as for art organizations and an arts policy, the fourth position, that of the transformalists, generates perhaps the best opportunity to recreate a free artistic zone, in which art and the necessary discourse can flourish. The transformalists assume that globalization is a unique process with contradictory movements. There is an increase in global networks, but at the same time there is the emergence of regionalization, for example in the Basque country or Flanders. The Treaty of Maastricht on the Europe of the Regions is also coloured by this dual movement of space expansion on the one hand and a new 'feudalism'

on the other. Furthermore, transformalists argue that global (uniform) flows are constantly appropriated and relocalized, while local culture is absorbed into global flows. As Simmel puts it, objective culture subjectivizes, and subjective culture objectivizes. This is why, for instance, the internal organization of the Guggenheim in Bilbao differs from that of the Guggenheim in New York, if only because of the differing influence of the trade unions. What matters is that it is precisely in this dual movement that a 'transformalist arts policy' attempts to guarantee artistic free space. It doesn't overreach in a over-hyped participation policy, but neither does it isolate a small internationally operating in-crowd. On the contrary, bridges are built between the two, and as indicated, 'intimate zones' are particularly suited to the purpose, precisely because they slow down global flows, generating a greater opportunity for individual appropriation.

But what does this intimate space exactly reveal? A place of intimacy, according to Simmel, is a site in which 'secrets' are divulged. Whenever someone is entrusted with a secret, after all, an intimate relationship develops, sometimes even a love story. An artwork too, given sufficient 'inertia', can reveal secrets. It no longer presents itself as a superficial image, but as a multifaceted being. This may be because it is accompanied by a story by the artist, a good exhibition text, a passionate guide, etcetera. But these are more the classical 'access methods'. A work of art can also show its political, economic and legal colours, and so appeal to a more heterogeneous audience. But even more significant is that the product shifts to the background even as the development process is exposed. Insight into the wings, after all, reveals the personal motivations of the artist, but also her or his ideological, legal and economic work contexts. The isolated artist's studio or the romantic garret is making way – with some frequency – for the public space of the open studio, in the broadest sense of the word (a museum, for instance, can integrate the characteristics of an open studio as a mental space). Words dominate here, good arguments and particularly dialogue. These resist commodification, safeguarding the free space from the dominance of a particular regime, precisely because it opens itself up in all its heterogeneity.

Maxine Kopsa

A Boot-Camp Scenario for Over-Funded Artists

Interview with Chris Evans on Militant Bourgeois: An Existential Retreat

Militant Bourgeois: An Existential Retreat is a project by British artist Chris Evans that became an exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA) and an artists' residence along the A10 in 2006. Fifteen artists accepted the challenge and confronted the primitive and unsubsidized 'retreat'. Evans focussed on the field of tension between patronage, especially the increasingly criticized Dutch system of state subsidies, and current art production. Maxine Kopsa talked to him about anachronisms and the relation between artist and society.

In 2005, I planned to do a group show at Juliette Jongma's gallery in Amsterdam and Chris Evans (Eastrington, 1967), then at the Scottish residency on the Bloemgracht, was my first studio visit. We talked about project after project, starting with the public sculptures he made, copies of existing outdoor corporate sculpture, which he placed at various locations – uninvited – in the city of Marseille (*Three Sculptures for Marseille*, 1999) and ending with the then still ongoing *Radical Loyalty*.[1]

Any confusion I experienced during that first official studio visit was due in part to my inability to come to terms with the relationship Chris Evans sought in many of the projects with others. In the past I promised Evans not to use the term 'collaboration' and when I do use it, it's in a negative sence. The reason I do keep bringing it up, though slyly, is to establish the importance of the notion of 'alliance' in Evans' work.

1. In 2002 Chris Evans purchased a piece of land in the industrial town of Järvakandi, Estonia with the intention of creating a sculpture park. He also began interviewing numerous managing directors from various international companies, from the corporate sectors of retail, telecommunication, energy and advertising. He discussed with them how they felt about loyalty, whether their standpoint was radical and together they developed these ideas into drawings (most now an engraving and one, a bronze maquette) of three dimensional objects. The idea is to use these visualizations as plans for life-size sculptures produced by a collective of Estonian artists (responsible for building the country's monuments during the era of Soviet occupation) Evans hired to create the sculpture park. The Järvakandi sculpture park thus becomes the sculpture park of this alliance of CEOs, initiated, then assembled and translated by Chris Evans.

Militant Bourgeois: An Existential Retreat demonstrates this distinctive alliance. A public work in every sense of the term, *Militant Bourgeois* comprised a veritable retreat, albeit a black painted Portakabin, which was located at Westpoort business park, near the approach to Amsterdam's A10 peripheral motorway. The sparse interior – the retreat was furnished with a table, one chair and a wood burning stove – reflects its stoic purpose, in Chris Evans' words: 'The retreat provided a boot-camp scenario for over-funded artists.' His most ambitious project to date, *Militant Bourgeois* addresses topics such as power, benefaction and the myth of the solitary genius-artist, tracing these issues through history to current social artistic circumstances. The starting point was the dialogue Evans initiated with Baron Jan Six, Lord of Hillegom and director of the Six collection. Together they discussed issues of patronage, heritage, and more specifically the existentialist problems facing those born into aristocracy – the constrictions of legacy and birthright. This lead Evans not only to conceive a place of retreat open to anyone who regards themselves as an artist, but also formed the basis for a script[2] and film (featuring artist Toon Verhoef as Baron Jan Six), airbrush paintings and, significantly, a wood burning stove. The elaborate design of this stove, with its flue of eleven branch-like ladders, loosely represents the eleven generations between Baron Six and his seventeenth-century forefather portrayed in Rembrandt's *Jan Six* (1654) and more directly refers to the strip of golden brocade on the depicted gentleman's cloak.

2. The script is based on an 'Existentialist narrative' by the philosopher Nina Power, commissioned by Evans. It was further developed into the film script by Evans and the writer Will Bradley.

To be sure, the collaborative aspects Chris Evans employs differ from those of a standard collaboration where two or more people invest similar levels of engagement and expect similar returns. More importantly, Evans' concerted efforts in

no way neglect the end result in favour of the human relational dealings involved. Alliance, though a key issue in Evans' works, is but a starting point, the more fascinating issue is the *position* of the maker – in his words, his stance.[3]

3 As the critic and art historian Michael Baxandall wrote: every artwork 'is the deposit of a social relationship'.

MAXINE KOPSA: Militant Bourgeois: An Existential Retreat *is a large-scale project, involving various stages of development and exceedingly distinct (visual) elements. It is both an abstract and aesthetic translation of a concept (in a series of exhibitions) and its literal rendition (the retreat itself). Are you forcing an enquiry into 'making' in general, its history and its moral (or ethical) position in our current society?*

CHRIS EVANS: The Retreat is not an attempt to solve social impasses or stake a claim in rewriting existential theories. It's not an altruistic community growth endeavour. A manipulated constellation of power relationships mangled with the ethics of aesthetics would be how I'd want people to see it.

Manipulation aside, the open call to participate in the retreat's residency programme was genuine. Who ultimately reacted?

The retreat was publicized by a poster campaign around the city. A whole range of artists applied – from those working in relative obscurity to others more prominent in their practice.

How did you formulate the invitation?

The form that people filled in said very little, it presumed that artists had heard about or seen the first stage of the artwork at the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam.

You said before the retreat had opened that it might not be important that anyone visited it. And you compared the whole mechanism of you making the retreat, or as you put it, 'setting things up in order to create a situation', to Derrida's notion of the gift, which in short revolves around the idea that 'for the gift to be received as a gift, it must not appear as such, since its mere appearance as gift puts it in the cycle of repayment and debt'. Can you explain the retreat's relation to this idea of 'gift'?

I was half-lying, it's just that I never imagined anyone would go there, and I didn't want all those who'd helped make the piece of work to be disappointed, but in

Militant Bourgeois, airbrush painting on paper, 60 x 26 cm, 2006 (courtesy of the artist, Galerie Juliette Jongma, Amsterdam & STORE, London).

Aigrettes with Ostrich Feathers (from the Six Collection, Amsterdam), airbrush painting on paper, 60 x 26 cm, 2006 (courtesy of the artist, Galerie Juliette Jongma, Amsterdam & STORE, London).

truth it wasn't of paramount importance. In highlighting anachronisms in both the relationship between artist and society (that of the lone creator, suffering on the fringes of society) and between artist and patron (reflecting on the seventeenth-century relationship between the burgomaster Jan Six and the art world then), I wanted to bring to attention what might also be currently anachronistic – that of the present relationship between the patronage of the Dutch state and artists based in the Netherlands. As for Derrida's notion of a gift, yes it would seem to fit with his definition since there was nothing I wanted in return from those I was offering the retreat to. If anything I owe them. In relationships with people I'm involving in an art piece there's something that goes unspoken – though perhaps that's not the best way of describing the situation. The artist Padraig Timoney thought the Italian conversational expression 'Non so se mi sono spiegato' – I don't know if I've explained myself – comes close, with its reference to a just-made conceptual point, idea or description. 'It's mostly introduced unsolicited – a checking that's constantly updated, a paused opportunity to recap, to compare notes on the state of transfer. What's interesting is the crafty inversion of power implicit within it – at first it seems utterly humble and mannerly, as if the only possible reason for the listener not being fully informed is the poor resources of the explainer's linguistic skills – a personification of the limits of language. But it also heralds an invisible yet clearly envisaged concept to which the speaker alone is partial, whose clarity must remain intact in delivery; recognizing the danger of a rough passage (like an 8 megapixel idea seen on the back of a 2 meg camera).'

You mention the Dutch state's relationship to artists – and, indeed, I always thought the retreat was specifically developed for the Netherlands, but seeing as it is now opening at the International Project Space in Birmingham, are its aims and implications the same, wherever it may be?

When I did the show at SMBA in June of last year, it was before the retreat opened. I wasn't interested in doing a public artwork unless the elements of the work leading up to it were shown. At SMBA the posters advertising the retreat were painted as part of a trompe l'oeil of an entire exterior wall, it wasn't clear whether the whole thing was fictional or not until the real posters went up a few weeks later. So at International Project Space in Birmingham (IPS) – now that the retreat has closed – it will read more like a documentational show. Yet the issues surrounding the whole thing prevail: in what way who is funding the work, be it the state or the market, influences what gets made.

But are you still discussing the Dutch funding situation?

The work implies that overly generous subsidies to artists in the Netherlands make for lazy art and that an Existential Retreat, where artists are taken out of

Installation view of *Portrait of Jan Six* by Rembrandt van Rijn, oil on canvas, 112 x 102 cm, 1654 (Courtesy of Six Collection, Amsterdam).

this cozy situation, is necessary. The UK doesn't have such generous funding, nevertheless the state is behind a lot of work that does get made – call it state sanctioned subversion. I think it's supposed to be a sign of a strong democracy when the state allows its citizens to be critical. Anyway, I hope the work at IPS will draw comparisons with the patronage situation between the Netherlands and the UK, and question in what way that affects the art that gets made.

You haven't relocated the actual retreat. Why not? Where is it now?

I don't think the UK needs the retreat. The retreat was dismantled – the wood-burning stove is all that is exhibited from the place itself.

How can you see the influence of the funding agent in a work? Can I see it in yours, for example?

From the third-hand 'transcendental' modernism of much corporate sculpture (strong and upward looking to echo the ethos of companies) to work that's doing the social work for the state (socially engaged pro-inclusive art) to the work that will fit neatly on a collector's wall. But then this all sounds a bit bleak doesn't it – and it's forgetting all the art that gets produced with intent that's irrespective of all of this. With work I make, where the patronage situation is relevant to what I'm setting out to do, I take the 'funding' out of the equation to see how this changes the dynamic. It supposes that I get the upper hand though often, conversely, shows that I might not have the last say . . . that I might not have the last laugh.

Is it wrong to be funded? Or, put differently, is there such thing as a 'healthier' funding agent?

I like it when my gallerists buy me drinks – compared to SMBA trying to put me up in an anti-squat to save money! Needless to say there are inherent obligations in any kind of patronage relationship.

If you would have to choose your personal patron (read: grant-giver), would he be from the political arena or the private sector?

I've found things to move faster when working with the private sector, you don't get bogged down with institutional bureaucracy. I would, however, be happy to get bogged down in red-tape if a Dutch funding organization took on the building of Radical Loyalty – my sculpture park in Estonia.

Are you truly interested in the 'patron' you select to work with? Do they ever become in some way or at some point interchangeable?

I'm very specific about whom I choose to work with and I don't think they are interchangeable. The background behind the director of Starbucks UK is a million miles away from that of a Bangladeshi Supreme Court Judge. The latter, Refaat Syed Ahmed has, in the past couple of years, suffered the assassination of both a member of his family and a close colleague. Nevertheless, and contrary to the easy cliché of power = corruption, his family is regarded as 'clean' in a country where few elite factions are regarded as such. Meanwhile, as the director of Starbucks UK, Cliff Burrows' concerns are likely to lie in how many Starbucks he can open on a single street and sustaining staff and customer loyalty – which, since that's his job, is fine. He, like Syed Refaat Ahmed, is acutely intelligent – they are aware of the need to confound people's ready-made judgments of their positions. If Cliff Burrows sincerely believes in Adam Smith's 'harmony of interests' (a scenario where private economic interests conduce to the moral and general good), then let's see how this stands up in the form of a sculpture, built by artists who formally built Soviet monuments, and in a country – Estonia – which is at that critical moment of opening its doors to global corporations and the 'open' market.

For Le Nouveau Siècle *guest curated by Xander Karksens at Museum van Loon in Amsterdam, you worked closely with the host – or you might say patron – of the exhibition. Could you tell me about the piece?*

It's a small ceramic titled *A Sculpture for Philippa Van Loon, The Other Statue (after E. Gorey)*. The sculpture I made resembles part of an illustration from an Edward Gorey book called *The Other Statue* in which there are macabre and somewhat mordant occurrences at an aristocrat's stately home. In Gorey's illustration, a fragment from a fallen sculpture – a hand and what appears to be the end of a crutch – is lying on the ground in front of the stately home and one of the visitors lies dead, out of the picture. It is perhaps as if the sculptures of the estate are seeking revenge on their patrons.

The gesture of the hand in the work I made differs from that in Edward Gorey's illustration. It is copied from a drawing given to me by Philippa Van Loon, following our conversation about how she felt growing up as a member of one of Holland's best known aristocratic families in the 'ivory tower' surroundings of a museum – the historical family home. She intended the gesture of the hand to be, in her words 'not a fist, but to have the constriction and muscle tension that is similar, yet also a gesture of still being able to look through into an opening – restrictive yet with a passage through'. It made me think about an estate owner's reply to the vengeful sculpture in Gorey's book.

Does working with a patron ever feel like a restriction, what with the appointments, the potential for misunderstanding and effort spent avoiding it?

Installation view of *Militant Bourgeois: An Existentialist Retreat* at SMBA (wood-burning stove, wall painting) 2006 (courtesy of the artist, Galerie Juliette Jongma, Amsterdam & STORE, London).

Yes. It often feels like going for a job interview, having to gain people's trust and then creating a situation in which they feel comfortable in telling me their thoughts, etcetera. Nevertheless, it does heighten the need for me to come out with something tangible from a meeting, something I can build on. I rarely get that from sitting in front of Google.

With the latest piece of work I'm making – a film and sculpture called *The Freedom of Negative Expression* – there's a break from previous strategies in that one of the two characters – a well-heeled nihilist – is entirely fictional and the other is loosely based on a surviving member of the British Constructivists. Having met her in Paris (she wishes to remain anonymous) I realized, after the eighth drink, that there was no way in which we were going to be able to directly work together.

Given the amount of work that goes into the production and realization of each project, how important is the final, physical outcome in relation to the process?

Although it's questionable as to how much I myself have a recognizable 'hand', I want the work to self-consciously show its *authorship*, to appear to have been made by an artist occupying an autonomous position in society. This is a stance which counters what *appears* to be the collaborative process of an artist fully integrated in society – the 'relational' gambit . . .

The object-nature of my work is also how I effect the tone and the pace of how things fit together, so with *A Sculpture for the Ahmed Family* I wanted the sculpture to deflate the bombastic, heavy subject matter. With *The Rock & The Judge* series I want my 'rocks' (which I see as a 'default' for 'sculpture' – in terms of subject matter and form) to appear quiet and passive – despite them standing in for the defendants. The drawings of the judges are by policemen and – given the often tense relationship between these two closely linked yet separate occupations, you're always going to get an interesting drawing from a policeman if you ask them to draw judges.

*You teach quite regularly and have done so in the past, you've even taught as work in itself (*Free Tutorials, *1999). Do you see teaching as a kind of service or, possibly, continuing the Derrida reference, as a form of gift giving?*

I've done a few days recently at De Ateliers and it doesn't feel like teaching, more like discussing mutual things that matter in a professional space where you can drop the tactfulness when you think it could be beneficial. The institution is heavy in its legacy but not in it's red tape or bureaucracy. [De Ateliers is a renowned, state-subsidized artists' institute in Amsterdam, eds.]

I only do a few days at Leeds University now and I get angry at the ineptitude of the place. *Free Tutorials* was a reaction to this ineptitude. I'm currently thinking

Interior of *An Existentialist Retreat*, November 2006.
Photo Marianne Vierò

Exterior of *An Existentialist Retreat*, November 2006.
Photo Marianne Vierò

it's best if I let students learn for themselves and so I encourage a mindset where they feel confident to take down their defenses.

Free Tutorials *was an All Horizons Club artwork – when you were working with Padraig Timoney and Duncan Hamilton. You and 18 artists traveled around in a minibus for two months visiting various* UK *art colleges – uninvited. Was the situation in the* UK *arts educational system so dire that you felt the need for such a radical mercy mission?*

Yes, absolutely, though I value the possibility of non-vocational study, and the importance of art schools – it is because of this that we did *Free Tutorials*.

Have things changed?

I don't know if art schools in the UK have changed over the last eight years since we did *Free Tutorials*. I did a day at Goldsmiths last week and there are three artists per tiny studio when, prior to this year, it used to be two. I guess that tells us something.

Is it necessary for teaching to be a clandestine form of gift giving?

I'm very confused about what art school teaching should be. Frankly I'd rather not work in these environments at under-graduate level until I've begun to fathom what my role could/should be if any at all. I'm worried that what I do could actually be a hindrance.

If you could choose just one, what's the most important thing you could possibly want your student to learn from you?

Sorry if I'm sounding like a hippy here but it should be about what they can learn for themselves.

Late in 2005 you organized a 'workshop' (or should I call it a show?) at Store, your gallery in London, where you invited art experts to be available for consultation. The one-day event (or should I call it piece?) was called Is My Work Too Commercial? *and involved 'tutors' giving advice to any artist concerned their work being too commercial and the adverse effect this may have on their practice. Should I see this work as an altruistic service?*

Not really from the offset, though good if the advice was useful. And it's best to pass on good advice. As Oscar Wilde put it: 'It's the only thing to do with it. It is never of any use to oneself.'

How serious a person are you?

Dramatically, yes.
Are you asking if there's humour in the work? For *Cop Talk* I'm serious in my intent in giving art students the opportunity to join the police force, though when people see the poster I guess they might think otherwise. Maybe this is a problem with the piece, though I enjoyed doing the airbrush poster for it. For this I researched Dutch police cars, looking for the best car they have in their arsenal. Since they don't manufacture cars in Holland they opted for the Italian built Lamborghini Countach. It's an extremely fast car and so good for chases. Unfortunately it has doors that swing slowly upwards. I like to imagine the Dutch Police catching a criminal on the motorway but unable to get out of their car fast enough to make the arrest . . . That's now one potentially humorous anecdote lying dead on the page. I don't know where to begin trying to talk about humour. As for 'irony' I cringe when I hear that word. It's such a catch-all term that it closes off more interesting ways of approaching something.

An Existentialist Retreat, airbrush painting on paper, 26 x 60 cm, 2006 (courtesy of the artist, Galerie Juliette Jongma, Amsterdam & STORE, London).

column

ARJEN MULDER

REVELATIONS FROM BEYOND

Pirate copies and fakes have a bad name, yet many an artist owes them a rich body of work. The music Franco et le T.P.O.K. Jazz put out on LPs in Zaïre in the 1980s would typically be on sale throughout the country on illegal cassettes within about four months. Their way of keeping one step ahead of this piracy was a stroke of genius: they produced a new LP every three months. This provided them with a tidy nest egg and us with 150 records of wonderful dance music.

Etcher and painter Anton Heyboer did something similar. In order to assure his five wives of an income after his death, he painted dozens of canvases every day in his characteristic style, each adorned with his sizable signature. His widows still have warehouses full of paintings and sell them under the motto: 'You can only be sure it's genuine if you buy it from us in Den Ilp.'

Somewhere in the Dutch polders there's a big barn with good overhead lighting where expert painters and silkscreen artists churn out lithographs of artists like Herman Brood, Corneille and Appel on an assembly line. In smaller, urban studios the work of Picasso, Matisse, Dali, Chagall, Giacometti and Hockney is being reproduced.

The only one who truly profited from this democratization of art is Karel Appel. In his early years he was often too poor to buy canvases and paint, so little work exists from this period. Then suddenly, unknown early works began to turn up. They were submitted to the painter, who must have thought, 'There's no way I could have painted this that year. On the other hand, it's not badly done – if I'd had the money at the time I would have painted something like that; maybe the top streak a bit brighter and blurrier, but still, you know what, I'm just going to say it's one of mine.' This validation must have come as a pleasant surprise to the makers of the paintings, and inspired them to produce even better early Appel work.

It won't be long before literary texts, too, are discovered, which, if their authors were still alive (or indeed are still living) would and will be recognized by them as written in their unique approach to sentence structure and language associations. If only they'd had more peace and quiet, time and concentration, they would have written these themselves! Once authors' names become big brands with price tags to match, it becomes profitable to counterfeit them. Thomas

Pynchon's work is probably already being produced by a team of writers.

Some writers anticipate this and develop a style that is so typical, or in fact so generic, that they can be perfectly imitated with little trouble by the fellow writers who will later fill in the gaps in their literary oeuvre. Others attempt to pre-empt this development by imitating Pessoa and writing as much new and unknown work destined for their desk drawers as possible, so that there is enough upon their deaths to supply the market for at least 70 years. In the Netherlands, over the past 15 years, the oeuvres of Nescio, Hanlo, Elschot and Ida Gerhardt have doubled thanks to the publication of suddenly discovered letters and notes.

Other authors wish to remain authentic and write in a style that will never be counterfeited because no one can make head or tail of it now. Or is it better to write clearly for a small group of attentive readers, providing them with such rich hours that you never need explain anything on radio or television, and therefore never become famous?

I don't know. When I think about what I'd love to happen after I die, I think of Nicola Tesla. He posthumously dictated one hefty tome after another to a medium in Wales, or was it Eastern Europe? I don't care who writes it down. One day a woman will sit at a computer and begin to type. She won't be writing; she'll be transcribing what she hears an external voice dictate to her inner ear. I'll be that voice. I'll come up with new essays, bundles of poetry, enthralling novels, travelogues, works of philosophy and revelations from the beyond. I hereby give my descendants permission to authenticate everything, as long as the work is just like I would have written it. We don't want rubbish. An artist doesn't live on in his oeuvre, but in his fakes. So reinvent me as often as possible.

Oliver Ressler

Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies

The Austrian artist Oliver Ressler (b. 1970) in many works focuses on forms of resistance against neo-liberal globalization. One of his recent projects is *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* (2003-2007). Having received an initial grant from republicart (www.republicart.net), the ongoing project consists of a series of installations, usually expanded with new video work (www.ressler.at). Each installation contains monitors with video interviews, as well as a typical quotation taken from one of these and projected in the exhibition space. Ressler made a presentation for *Open*, in which nine text excerpts from the video interviews are combined with installation shots from various cities.

bolo'bolo

With p.m., 22 min., 2004

Forum Stadtpark, Graz

I want to emphasize that there is not one single idea in this book that is new. Everything in it is something that I found. It is possible to arrive at bolo from various directions, at the basic unit, how people can live together somewhat sensibly, without destroying the planet, their nerves, and their offspring. One approach is communication: when people cannot speak rationally with one another, then they are dependent on higher authorities, they have to have supervisors to employ communication. We understand, for example, communication theory, which says that communication can function informally with up to about 150 people, which means that no structures are necessary. It is, then, quite comfortable, and there are a lot more arguments than necessary, because of the fact that communication is so easy. That's why I arrived at a basic unit, a gathering, which must be significantly greater than 150. I said 500 wouldn't be bad, 400, 600, 700 or 800. Then there is another threshold that must lie somewhere around 1,000, after which it becomes necessary to delegate in order to organize. This administration would then require a committee and a certain professional level. Here we arrive at the realm of structurally necessitated bureaucracy. And I don't like that; the effort quickly increases, because you have to control the bureaucracy so that it really does what you want. And these control organs are, once again susceptible to corruption, and they must also be monitored; it becomes quite complicated. For me, the window is somewhere between the sensible social organization of the 150-person comfortable feeling and the 1,000-person incipient uncomfortable one. It must be there somewhere in between: that's the one approach. Another approach could be something more ecologically oriented. The ecological problems on this planet lie in the north where we have to heat and have created an urban layout, which necessitates automobile transport, for example.

Inclusive Democracy

With Takis Fotopoulos, 37 min., 2003

Galerija Skuc, Ljubljana

What is inclusive democracy? I think it is important to stress that the inclusive democracy project is not just an economic model, but it is a broader political project, which aims to remake society at all levels, at the political level, the economic level, the social level, and, of course, in the ecological sphere. The overall aim of the inclusive democracy project is to create a society in which people determine themselves, in which, in other words, the 'demos', as it was the classical concept for the people, has overall control over the political sphere, the economic sphere, and the social sphere in general. So the inclusive democracy project, in a sense, is a synthesis of the two major historical traditions, the socialist tradition and the democratic tradition, and also of the currents that developed in the last 30 or 40 years, the new social movements - the feminist movement, the ecological movement, the identity movements of various sorts, and so on. In other words, the inclusive democracy project is a synthesis of all those historical experiences, of the socialist and also the democratic tradition and all those new social movements. In this sense, we can say that the inclusive democracy project is neither a theoretical construct, as it is the product of all those historical experiences, nor is it a utopia - and it is not a utopia because there are already trends all around us leading to a society which in various aspects resembles the inclusive democracy society. Thus, there are all over experiments going on with alternative institutions and whenever there is an insurrection, like for example the recent Argentinean one, we have seen people organizing themselves in general assemblies and trying to organize political and economic life according to principles which... are the principles of the inclusive democracy project.

Participatory Economics

With Michael Albert, 37 min., 2003

Transmediale.04, Berlin

'What do you want?' is a question often asked to activists. Parecon is a possible answer regarding economics. It is an alternative to capitalism built on a few key values and institutions. The values are equity, solidarity, diversity and self-management. Equity refers to how much we get from our work. And the norm is that we should be remunerated for effort and sacrifice, not for property or power. Solidarity is the notion that people should be concerned about one another and benefit in concert with one another rather than be mutually opposed and trampling upon one another. More solidarity is better than less. Diversity is about the range of options we have. A wider range of options is better than homogenizing and reducing the range of options at our disposal. And self-management has to do with how much control we have over our lives. Self-management means that we have a say in the decisions that affect us in proportion to the degree that we are affected by them. So for me developing an economic vision means trying to figure out institutions to accomplish production, consumption and allocation in ways that enlarge equity, solidarity, diversity, and self-management rather than diminishing them. The institutions I come up with are workers' and consumers' councils, balanced job complexes, remuneration for effort and sacrifice, and participatory planning. Workers and consumers councils are direct democratic vehicles by which workers and consumers can develop, organize, and manifest their preferences. Within these we use self managed decision making methods to impact how much is produced, what we consume, and so on.

The Subsistence Perspective

With Maria Mies, 26 min., 2005

Kunstihoone, Tallinn

But if we look closely at how people survive and everything that they do then we discover that the old principles I spoke of previously were reactivated: there is mutual assistance and people are again willing to do everything they possibly can do by themselves. That is a new and positive perspective, since with these activities - even if they take place at a very low level - people rediscover their sovereignty, their own authority to produce their lives, as we call it. That is no shortcoming, it is something very positive to discover, that we are entirely capable of collectively producing and organizing our lives together, with others. Naturally, you also need money. I don't want to deny that at all, but exclusively working for money is not the best thing - that is only one side of it. The other is that subsistence production, or subsistence orientation, satisfies needs in a much more comprehensive way than purchased products ever could. These purchased goods actually don't contain anything. It is dead labor that is materialized there. They are used, then they're gone, then you have to buy new goods and people are never satisfied.... There are a few principles that are just as modern today as they were before. I have already mentioned a few of them. If these principles were at the center of the economy rather than individual egoism, as is the case today - all of economics is based on the assumption that at the center is individual use, individual interest. If instead, there were something there such as mutual aid, reciprocity, communality, collective work, and also collective enjoyment, then that would be another matter. When consumption and production are no longer so strongly separated, then that is also another matter. Those are thoughts that first must enter our minds. That is not so simple, and I can see that myself. It is difficult to step down from this consumption model that we have now, although people know that it hasn't made us happy.

Libertarian Municipalism

With Chaia Heller, 32 min., 2005

Second International Biennial of Contemporary Art, Sevilla

Libertarian Municipalism is basically a philosophy that says that every day people, citizens, cities and towns and villages across the world are rationally capable of governing themselves. And what he (Murray Bookchin) tries to do is balance principles of autonomy and cooperation through the philosophy of Libertarian Municipalism, by saying what happened if you had communities that had autonomy on a local level, but that that autonomy was always limited by and in dialogue with a larger collectivity, which would be the confederation. So there is a tension between the self-governing municipality, which would be a self-governing city, town or village, and the larger confederation, that the city or town or village is part of. The citizens are bound together by sharing a common constitution that is grounded on a set of ecological and social principles, and the confederation is bound together by that same exact constitution. There is a tremendous concern among leftists about what is democracy, what ought it to look like, and what ought it to become. As a social ecologist for me there is the sense that we have the potential to have a direct democracy, which means, that people in cities, towns and villages would gather as citizens in a local town meeting, which you could call a general assembly, or public assembly, or citizens assembly, and it is that body that would be the driving force for policy making in society in general. The idea is that the rule would be by the general populous, on behalf of the general populous, and they would be making policy for the general populous. Libertarian Municipalism is an attempt to formulize that vision of a directly democratic society without turning it into a recipe or blueprint or how do manual, which is I think a very dangerous thing and would drain all the poetry from the vision.

Anarchist Consensual Democracy

With Ralf Burnicki, 29 min., 2005

Miroquesada Garland Gallery, Lima

If I want to describe the anarchist principle or model of consensus, perhaps it is helpful to first speak of this consensus model as a theory of independent decision-making, or as a theory of direct democracy. The model refers to the intrinsic value of political decisions, that is, the way that a political decision is made is put at the center of focus. 'Consensus' stems etymologically from the concept of 'accordance', 'agreement'. Consensus, because it should be free of dominance and refers to an actual communication and decision-making process, is important in concrete decision-making. In a theory of direct democracy, concrete decision-making means, for example, that the agenda includes questions of how to produce something. For example: how can we build a center? How can we build a street? How can we build a collective? What should we do? Looking at representative democracy - a democratic form characterized by representative systems - it becomes clear that massive numbers of people who are directly affected by these systems are ignored. This is easily demonstrated by the German Federal Republic's Hartz IV law and by all of the Hartzlaws, which simply ignore all recipients of unemployment assistance and gradually push them into poverty. Persons affected by such decisions are neglected at all times and in every respect. In contrast, the anarchist principle of consensus democracy foresees a very different principle that can be understood in two ways. First, in an anarchist consensual democracy, affected persons would have the right to be consulted on decisions. Second, all persons who are disadvantaged by a decision - I'll call them dissenters - would have the right to veto in this decision-making process. This right allows them to nullify the decision so that discussion can begin again. Through their right to veto, dissenters would have great significance within the decision-making process, and the possibility to avert disadvantages.

Caring Labor

With Nancy Folbre, 20 min., 2003

Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center, Istanbul

There is a kind of paradox of the weakening of the patriarchal control over women. And the paradox is, that it is a great thing in terms of choices for individual women, it is a great thing for women who want to have more room to express their own individuality and to be less constrained by traditional concepts of femininity. But the paradox is, now that there is no longer pressure on women to provide their care work, there is really no pressure on anyone to provide it. A result could be a reduction in the overall supply of care to other people within the home and in the market.... But if you think that care work does not necessarily succeed as well in a market environment, then you have to worry about it. And you have to think about ways that we could collectively ensure a greater supply and quality of caring labor, in ways that are independent of the market, or at least can help supplement the market provision that we use. That is where the need to think more creatively about social institutions comes into play.... All alternative economic systems are about organizing labor. That is the big question: How do we organize ourselves? And the point I am making is that when we answer that question, whether we are coming out from a corporate capitalist point of view or from a socialist point of view, we have to recognize that there is this kind of labor that is different than other kinds, that is not as reducible to the logic of exchange or to the logic of central planning and bureaucratic administration. It is an intrinsically personal, intrinsically emotional kind of exchange that requires long-term relationships between people. And that is not something that the grand theoreticians of capitalism thought about, and it is not something that the grand theoreticians of socialism thought about either.

Change the World Without Taking Power

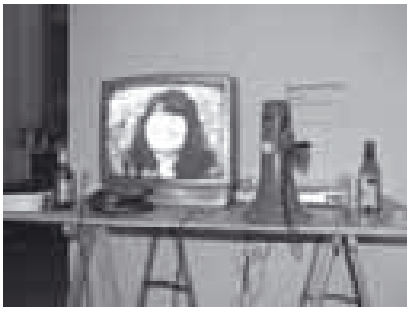
With John Holloway, 23 min., 2004

Sorlandets Kunstmuseum, Kristiansand

The revolution I have in mind has to be thought of as a question rather than an answer. On the one hand it is clear that we need some basic transformation of society, on the other hand it is clear that the way that we have tried over the last century to transform society through the state has failed. So that leaves us with the conclusion that we have to try it in some other way. We can't just give up the idea of revolution. I think what has happened in recent years is that people have come to the conclusion that because the transformation of society through the state did not work therefore revolution is impossible. My argument is just the contrary, that in fact revolution is more obviously urgent than ever. But that means rethinking how we can do it, trying to find other ways. But at the moment, at this stage, this means posing the question and trying to think how on earth do we develop the question. I think it is important to think that revolution is a question rather than an answer, because the revolutionary process in itself has to be understood as a process of asking, as a process of moving out, not of telling people what the answers are, but actually as a process of involving people in a movement of self-determination.... Capitalism exists not because we created it in the nineteenth century or in the eighteenth century or whenever. Capitalism exists today only because we created it today. If we don't create it tomorrow, then it won't exist. It appears to have an independent duration, but in fact that is not true. In fact capital depends from one day to the next on our creation of capital. If tomorrow we all stay in bed, then capitalism will cease to exist. If we don't go and create it then it won't exist any more. If we begin to think of capitalism in terms of how we stop creating it, if we think about the question of revolution in terms of how we stop creating it, then this doesn't solve the problems.

Utopian Feminist Visions

With Marge Piercy, 24 min., 2003



Espace Forde, Geneve

Most utopian novels that women have written are very different. They tend to much looser, more anarchical societies. They tend to be very concerned that the daily work of society should be as prestigious as the jobs that are now loaded with rewards. In other words that helping to raise children, helping to heal the sick, helping to give birth, helping to die peacefully and gently, helping to socialize people, helping to negotiate between people, should be as prestigious as in our society taking money away from people is, or manipulating the stock market, or all the other things that our society seems to reward so highly. Taking over companies and driving them out of business, that sort of thing. Basically women's utopias are very concerned with overcoming loneliness, because what is utopia? Utopia is what you don't have. It is the fantasies about what you lack and you feel you lack in society. So if you create an utopia in which everyone is concerned with raising of children, everyone shares the burden of doing the necessary and almost invisible work of the society, then you know, that it was probably created by somebody who lives in a society in which women are penned up alone in little houses or flats with their children, going quietly crazy, feeling the whole burden on them. Whatever they are doing, it is wrong. Whatever they do, in 15 years some counsellor will say to them, it is your fault. In most feminist utopias such as 'Woman on the Edge of Time' basically sex is never coerced. It is usually not a society in which people live in the couples we live in now. Serial monogamy does not exist, I think, in any of the utopias created by women. People often live together in larger kinship or social groups, in which they can deal with the loneliness and the lack of communication, of community, that so many women experience. In some, sex is romanticized; in others it is much more promiscuous, much easier, but it almost always crosses the boundaries of what our society considers appropriate heterosexual activity.

Swop Network

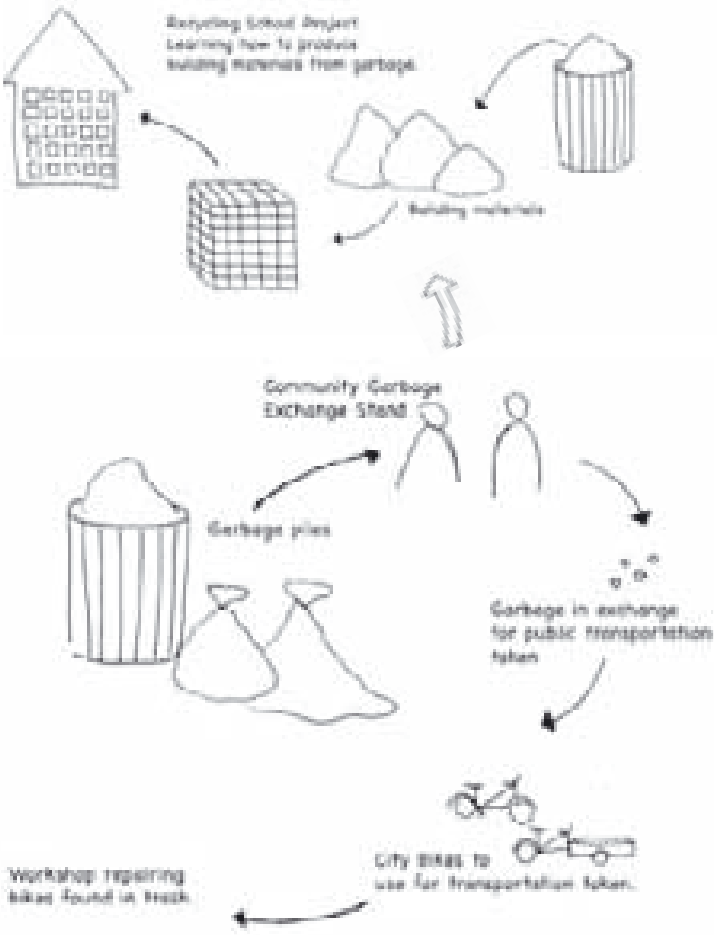
Give Away in Circulation

In 2003, Lise Skou and Andrea Creutz, both working in Denmark, set up Swop Projects, a platform for developing and visualizing alternative models for the dominant global monetary economy. Their projects continually criticize and challenge the growing notion of 'intellectual property' as expressed in copyright, patents and exclusive rights.

Their contribution to *Open* stems from the Give Away Shops that are regularly organized by Swop Projects. On these occasions they ask visitors to sketch ideas for strategies to call the hegemony of the current system into question. These ideas can be both purely pragmatic as well as utopian. Their contribution consists of a special selection of these sketches. The website www.swopnetwork.dk features a complete survey of the ideas, offering inspiration and an invitation to add new ones.

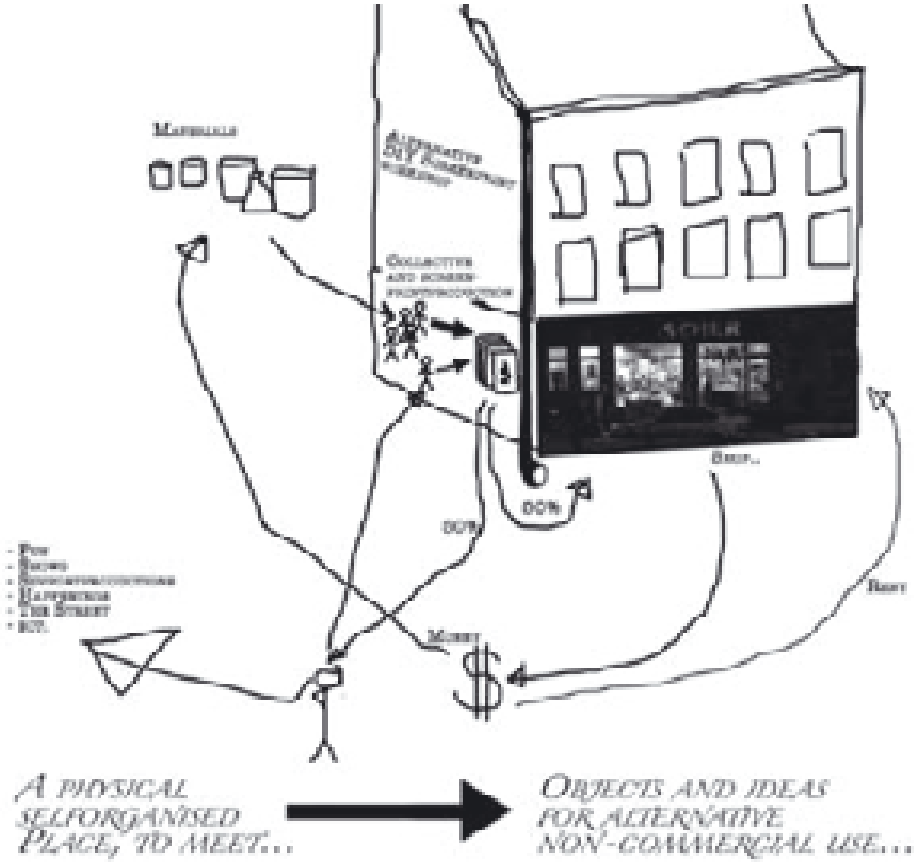
Please feel free to copy and make use of the follow-ing pages.

Waste reduction and garbage/transportation exchange system



Contrubution by Barbara Katzin. barb.katzin@gmail.com

Collectively organized workshop



'Fleicherei is a collectively organized printing workshop in Berlin, where I used to work. The members produce individual prints but half of what they produce goes into the collective stock and is sold in the shop. What they earn from the sale is used for common material and activities.' foto.obin.org/berlin. Contribution by Eva La Cour efalacour@gmail.com

City Gleaning

Collecting food in local fruit and vegetable stores at 6 am.

Cooking

Handing out food in a public space.

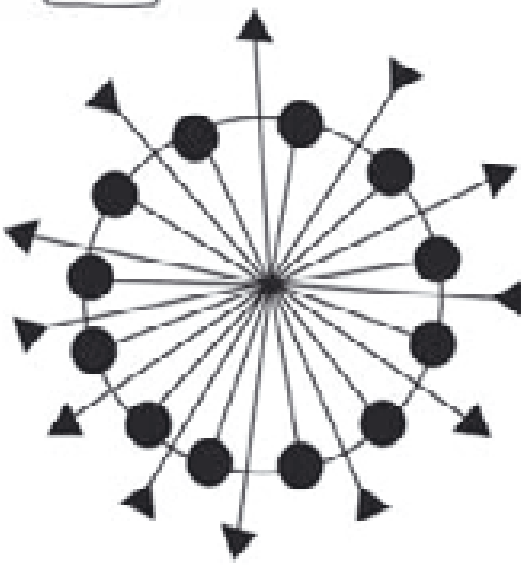
Contribution by Steffen Jonassen steffenjonas@hotmail.com

Contribution by Anna Jin Hwa Borstam, aborstam@hotmail.com

Community based exchange and resource caring

'Experiences in relation to the developing of a communal green space in co-operation with local residents in Copenhagen.'
'Solar ovens built from second hand cardboard and tin foil costs almost nothing to make and it is a free and environmentally friendly way to cook your lunch.' Contribution by Nis Rømer. www.publik.dk/hotsummer/projects, www.org-urb.dk/glentehaven, www.free-soil.org

Network for exchange of knowledge.



'OPEN forum for artists run by artists. Free of charge. Setting up meetings to present art, ideas and strategies in a professional environment. A way to develop artistically/intellectually outside of the institutions.' Find out more at www.openopen.se
Contribution by Anna Henriksson and Kamilla Levring.

anna@annahenriksson.se, kamilla-levring@rocketmail.com

Give Away in Circulation

The sketches – here presented in a 'photocopy friendly' layout – have been assembled as part of a "Give away and share event" which we host every second month at rum46 in Aarhus (DK). Commodities, as well as ideas, are collected, circulated and disseminated.

All items are available for free in the give away shop. In the workshop section sketches are produced, collected, copied and distributed freely. Computers, drawing tools and a copy machine are provided.

The ideas articulated in these events, as well as in the sketches collected, claim to be ideas for 'price-less' sharing of commodities and information; collective effort and collaborative innovations.

With this project we want to present ideas on open network solutions and economic systems based upon exchange. These ideas are put into circulation for anyone to copy for free.

Many people have contributed. Some with ideas already implemented, others with utopian ideas, old ideas, new ideas, projects realized and projects never realized etc. We will continue to ask people to contribute with ideas to exchange and share.

Ideas can be posted at:
http://www.swopnetwork.dk/users/swopnetwork/mediawiki-1.6.5/index.php?title=Main_Page
or sent to us via e-mail to: swopnetwork@swopnetwork.dk

Dennis Kaspori and Jeanne van Heeswijk

Guest ≠ Welcome

This section assembles various texts that reflect on the public domain's problematic position in today's society. With a government that is devolving power and has also wholly geared its policy towards risk limitation, repression and the avoidance of confrontation, we must abandon the idea that the public domain is something we can take for granted. The public domain has to be created. This opens up the possibility of cultural practices operating in this void.

The editors of *Open* invited Dennis Kaspori and Jeanne van Heeswijk to author a contribution including various initiatives that raise this issue and formulate proposals that could lead to potential solutions. The text below also serves as the point of departure for the two-year project 'Hospitality for what is to come', which Jeanne van Heeswijk and Dennis Kaspori are realizing in association with the European Cultural Foundation from the 'Blauwe Huis' (the 'Blue House') in Amsterdam. The project will consist of a number of interconnected guesthouses, meeting places and clandestine routes that serve as a platform for contributing to the debate about hospitality and migration.

Dennis Kaspori and
Jeanne van Heeswijk

Hospitality for What Is to Come

Eeuphemia UCAS

Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic amongst others. Insofar as it has to do with the ethos*, that is, the residence, one's home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners,* ethics *is* hospitality*; ethics is so thoroughly coextensive with the experience of hospitality.*[1]
Jacques Derrida

1. Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), 16-17.

Over the last decade, many French suburbs, the so-called *banlieues*, have regularly formed the backdrop for violent clashes between youngsters and the police. This was already seen in the 1990s, but disturbances flared up again in 2005 after the death of two young men. This led to a series of turbulent nights in the suburbs of numerous French cities, including Paris, Marseille and Lyon. Hundreds of cars went up in flames. The rage and powerlessness of the French youth was chiefly the result of high levels of unemployment and crime as well as the lack of amenities and education in the *banlieues*.

The great majority of the population of these areas sees itself being denied the connection to the social and economic life in these cities. Young people especially, and the second- and third-generation children of North African immigrants (the so-called *beurs*) most particularly, feel they have no prospects. It is a form of geographic discrimination. If you give the 'wrong' postcode when you apply for a job then you don't stand a chance. For example, as a job applicant, it is better not to mention the postcode 93 (for Seine-St. Denis to the north of Paris), where the riots broke out in 2005.

But the problem runs deeper. A large section of the population is simply sidelined and disqualified as serious citizens. Writing on his website, Mathieu Kassovitz, director of the film *La Haine*, published an article that was prompted by the 2005 riots: 'If the suburbs are exploding once again today, it is not due to being generally fed up with the conditions of life that entire generations of "immigrants" must fight with every day. There is not, unfortunately, anything political in the combat that is pitting the youth of low rent housing projects against Nicolas Sarkozy's police forces. These burning cars are surface eruptions in the face of the lack of respect the Minister of the Interior has shown toward their community.'[2]

2. Mathieu Kassovitz, 'Working Class France . . .', Tuesday 8 Nov. 2005, see: http://www.mathieukassovitz.com/blognews2/.

The French Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, openly entered the fray with young delinquents by branding them scum and threatening to

send the youngsters back to their country of origin, hereby overlooking the fact that most of them were born and raised in France. They have, however, been hidden away in areas lacking in proper communications with the rest of the city.

In *Roissy Express*, François Maspero describes the journey he made through the *banlieues* in the early 1990s accompanied by the photographer Anaïk Frantz. He tellingly captures how people are forced to live in isolation on a housing estate for which the immediate surroundings have provided no economic rationale for years already: 'The "3000" is completely off the beaten track, without rail or metro links. It is far removed from the rest of Aulnay and from everything else. The motorway acts like a trench, cutting it off from neighbouring districts and housing complexes, from the rest of the world. And it stands right next to another motorway, but it has just a single access road. The estate was built in the early 1970s because there was a big new Citroën factory immediately alongside it. It was referred to as the "Rose des Vents" ("The Windvane"), the "3000" or "The Ship". Why? Is it the fault of the architecture? So where are the bridges and underpasses? And who would even want to use the word "architecture" for this? It seems more like the fault of isolation on the immeasurable seas. According to their friends it is a ship with passengers who are on a long but motionless journey and yet always have the sense of being in transit.'[3]

3. François Maspero and Anaïk Frantz (photography), *Roissy Express: A Journey Through the Parisian Suburbs*, trans. Paul Jones (London/New York: Verso, 1994), 36-37.

Here Maspero strikingly describes how this physical isolation contributes to the social and cultural immobility of these inhabitants, with all the resulting feelings of powerlessness. In a highly concrete form, the example reveals a striking paradox of our time: capital, goods and services are assumed to be able to move as freely as possible, while human freedom of movement is subject to more and more constraints.

Zones Urbaines Sensibles

The *banlieues* are a telling example of the districts where this paradox is manifest most clearly. These are the places where the big social issues of integration, employment and housing converge, the blind spot in the cartography of globalization. These 'Zones Urbaines Sensibles', as they are euphemistically labelled in France, lay bare a social conflict at the territorial heart of the global economy. The major urban hubs have a gravitational pull for everyone who is endeavouring to tap in to this global economy. They are therefore able to attract a critical mass of talent and technology but are simultaneously confronted with a large group of people

who want to make this connection yet are unable to achieve this. That makes the discrepancies and the associated social problems in these zones starker than anywhere else.

Michael Hardt and Toni Negri argue that these are the places where the First and Third Worlds increasingly exist alongside one another. In their book *Empire*, Hardt and Negri offer an implicit explanation for the social unrest in the *banlieues*. They describe them as places that are aimed at creating isolation in an attempt to keep the big social problems out of sight and mind: 'Alternatively, consider how the *banlieu* of Paris has become a series of amorphous and indefinite spaces that promote isolation rather than any interaction or communication.'[4]

4. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 188.

At the same time, however, they argue that this exclusion is no longer a viable option. In Paris this was made all the more obvious in 1996, when a group of approximately 300 illegal aliens occupied a number of public places in the city and then gathered together at the church of St Bernard in Montmartre. 'The *sans-papiers* created space of sociological, legal and philosophical debate in the very heart of the French capital: they asked questions about the relations between the city and the nation, between the refugee and the law, between rights and equity.'[5]

5. Mireille Rosello, *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 5.

Walls

The remarkable thing is that we are seeing these attempts at segregation ever more frequently: walls, barriers and repressive measures are being raised everywhere. Remarkable in that regard is a photographic essay recently published in the Dutch newspaper *de Volkskrant* about the increasing number of walls that have recently been constructed in response to social problems. It exposes the physical pendant of a more widespread repressive trend. The essay includes photos of a wall several metres high around a neighbourhood in the Italian city of Padua that is meant to contain the problems of drug dealing and unlawfulness, as well as the fence running for miles and miles around the Spanish enclave of Metilla in Morocco.[6]

6. Iñaki Oñorbe Genovesi, 'Hét middel tegen elk probleem: de muur', *de Volkskrant*, 7 October 2006.

In the wake of 2001, governments seem particularly enthralled by security, and they are primarily called to account for their public task as the upholders of public order. The path that has been chosen is that of isolation rather than communication and interaction, as Hardt and Negri have already pointed out. What is forgotten in this, however, is

that besides this task they are also responsible for another public role: they are also responsible for the preservation of the public domain. Public domain should be understood in the broad sense in this context, conceived as the space for encounter, exchange and confrontation.

Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp define the public domain as those locations where an exchange between different social groups can 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.'[7]

7. Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain*, trans. Andrew May (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2001), 36-37.

The text by Hajer and Reijndorp could be seen as an appeal to no longer regard the public domain as the result of purely economic and legal considerations but to start seeing and using it as the (per)formative basis of a community in the making.

Public Domain as Creative Practice

It is, however, this way of thinking about the public domain that is completely ignored. The current politics of repression is not consistent with the casualness with which we still talk about the public domain. The public domain is no longer a given, a right that we can claim just like that. It is therefore high time that we started to regard the public domain as a practice. Public domain must be created, it must be formed. This view of public domain as a creative practice makes it interesting to consider which initiatives are being driven by artistic and architectural practice in order to create and shape that public domain.

In his essay 'Grootstedelijke reflecties, de verbeelding van de openbare ruimte' (Metropolitan reflections: imagining public space), Henk Oosterling states that it is possible to reflect on the relationship between art and public domain in various ways. He ultimately reaches the conclusion that it must be possible even to see art as public domain: 'Art activates and drives publicness. The universal reference point seems to be a communal experience in which the previously mentioned fields of tension [body/mind, time/space, private/public, physical/virtual, local/global, foreign/personal, DK] are reflected upon. The starting point here is not a predetermined identity, but an aesthetic sensitivity with regard to differences

that are situated in space both physical and temporal. Gaining insight into this diversity demands both material and conceptual reflection. . . . The work effects transposition rather than seeking its place. Through its reflectivity it creates new spaces within pre-existing public spaces: these are transformed.'[8] Within this framework, artistic and architectural practices are primarily called on for their capacity to create space for the materialization and development of a community, and for their ability to visualize this.

8. Henk Oosterling, 'Grootstedelijke Reflecties (1999), De verbeelding van de openbare ruimte', *Interakta* #5, Grootstedelijke reflecties, over kunst en openbare ruimte, CFK, Rotterdam, 2002, 11.

The public domain can be introduced into this process by developing and making available a platform for exchange. A broadly supported and integral idea about living together, about community, evolves during this exchange. To achieve this it is important to find an answer to questions that return time and again: how do you intervene in a given situation in such a way that the people concerned can increase the number and intensity of their ties? How do you fuel a process that creates the preconditions for alternative connections and unprecedented correlations that make new experiences and denotations possible? How might the urban forces be combined so that you can develop places where intimate social and formal situations can converge?

Posing such questions makes it possible to shape the public domain in ways unlike those we have been accustomed to thus far. Even if this is only possible when proceeding from the notion that public domain as practice is only local and usually temporary, it provides an opportunity to devise new models for care and hospitality that countermand the discourse of segregation. The development of such models makes it possible to remodel the public domain so that communities are once again able to secure a place and standing for themselves. It is a term such as hospitality that provides the opportunity to better understand the fragile situation in which the inhabitants of the 'Zones Urbaines Sensibles' find themselves and to arrive at more inclusive models of urbanism.

Hospitality

In her book *Postcolonial Hospitality*, Mireille Rosello broaches this problem and argues that it is becoming increasingly difficult to reconcile the metaphor of immigration as a form of hospitality with the social and legal reality. That reality increasingly seems to be following the logic of commercial hospitality that we are familiar with from hotels. 'Recognizing that the foreigner is locked in a commercial logic with the so-called host nation would at least allow cultural commentators to articulate a descrip-

tion of the immigrant as "paying" guest that would be less cynical than the caricature used by the [French] Minister of the Interior. Naturally, different metaphors are competing for the best place under the sun of common sense and obviousness. It is also true that the same metaphor can be recruited by radically opposed agendas. But it may be desirable that the images we use reveal rather than mask such agendas.'[9] Here Rosello is describing the task that exists for cultural practices to call these images into question and attempt to devise new visions and models of hospitality.

9. Mireille Rosello, op. cit. (note 5), 35.

To make this more tangible we can return to the youngsters in the *banlieues*. The impotence of these young people, their sense of not being taken seriously as citizens, is inextricably linked with the fact that, in the final analysis, they are repeatedly forced to behave like guests. As 'second-generation' immigrants they are always expected to be able and willing to mediate between guest and host, to function as the key for cultural exchange and cohabitation. But at the same time they are never in a position to act as hosts themselves.

Hospitality means developing a place where they can live, where they are in a position to feel at home and where they can subsequently perform as host. And if that place extends beyond the private domain and they are allowed to feel at home in the public domain as well then there is the possibility that we will learn to live together as a community. For the time being, however, their presence in the public domain is primarily viewed in terms of risk: the risk of nuisance and confrontation. But this is sooner the risk of a lack of understanding. The risk of hospitality lies elsewhere: 'The very precondition of hospitality may require that, in some ways, both the host and the guest accept, in different ways, the uncomfortable and sometimes painful possibility of being changed by the other.'[10]

10. Ibid., 176.

The texts that follow problematize the public domain from the viewpoint of various practices. The event, the place, the campaign, temporary and mobile interventions, and the economic system offer a differentiated perception of the opportunities to create a public domain, even if it is only temporary or extremely localized. For example, art historian Merel Willemsen provides insight into the Camp for Oppositional Architecture, a two-day event organized by the Berlin-based architectural journal, *An Architektur*, in association with Casco in Utrecht. The Camp brought together people who share a growing disaffection with the dominant architectural practice, which in their eyes takes insufficient consideration of the political implications of the profession and fails to critically address important issues such as globalization and the continuing dismantling of the welfare state.

The Universal Embassy is a project that demonstrates how judicial space can be exploited, creating a place in the former Somali embassy in Brussels that serves as a base to enable the *sans-papiers* – the people 'without official documents' – to meet each other, exchange information and emerge from the shadows en masse. In his text, the Belgian artist Tristan Wibault describes the Universal Embassy as an embassy for those who no longer have one.

Opening a highly personal window on his life as an activist, Dutch radio producer and activist Jo van der Spek explains how political activism is becoming increasingly interwoven with cultural activities. The leitmotif in his story is the 'Vertrokken Gezichten' (Departed Faces) campaign, which serves as a mark of solidarity with the victims of the fire at the deportation centre at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport.

Transparadiso, a Vienna-based collective of artists and architects, demonstrates how temporary and mobile interventions can function in an over-regulated planning process. Tactical interventions and strategic thinking make it possible, invited as well as uninvited, to create space in these processes for a greater involvement and accountability of all the actors. Lastly, the Argentinian collective m7red offers a probing analysis of the economic crisis in Argentina and shows how this has, for example, led to the introduction of alternative practices for the exchange of goods and services – cultural ones in particular – that have ended up beyond the reach of most Argentinians.

Merel Willemsen

Camp for Oppositional Architecture

An Initiative of An Architektur

Lido STF

In the 1930s, Danish landscape architect C.T. Sorensen found that children would rather play with junk and rubbish than in the playgrounds designed by him. The logical conclusion from this observation was that children find it fun to design and build their own playground equipment, and in so doing manipulate their environment. The 'Adventure Playground' was born: a place for children to indulge their creativity and create new spatial realities. In much the same way the editorial staff of the Berlin architectural journal *An Architektur* detected dissatisfaction, disaffection with built environments created in accordance with neoliberal principles, such as the Vinex location, the yuppies' playground.[1]

1. http://anarchitektur.com.

An Architektur was set up in 2002 by a number of members of the architects' collective *freies fach*. On Friday 10 and Saturday 11 November 2006, in cooperation with Casco in Utrecht, they organized a second 'Camp for Oppositional Architecture', subtitled 'Theorizing Architectural Resistance'. The occasion for this event was a growing dissatisfaction among young architects, detected by the editorial staff of *An Architektur*, with the dominant architectural practice which in their eyes took insufficient account of the political implications of the profession, and which neglected to pay critical attention to important subjects like globalization and the progressive dismantling of the welfare state. With the aid of lectures and workshops, spread over two days, some 100 participants, from all over Europe, looked into the possibility of resistance and opposition within architecture and urban design in the prevailing neoliberal climate[2].

2. For the complete programme see www.cascoprojects.org and www.oppositionalarchitecture.com/.

Henri Lefebvre – A Source of Inspiration

An important source of inspiration for *An Architektur* has been the French socialist philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991). During his lifetime Lefebvre, who has been called the greatest Marxist thinker since Marx himself, published almost 70 books including the three-volume *Critique de la vie quotidienne*. He is probably best known for his book *La production de l'espace* (1974). According to Lefebvre, space is a social and political construct, manifesting itself in three different ways. The first is as 'perceived space', space that is empirically observable. This space is concrete and physical and belongs to the material domain. The second is as 'conceived space', an abstraction, belonging to the domain of idealism, a mental construct which could, for example, be mathematical or geometrical. The third is as what is known as 'lived space', where physical and mental awareness of space combine and space is understood as a social product, something that changes with time. When this space is used, when people live in it and interact with one another, it becomes loaded with symbols and significance. Thus a playground is only really a playground when there are actually children playing there, giving meaning to a piece of ground, giving a place emotional value.

As regards the production of space, Lefebvre stated that every form of social organization reproduces itself in the built environment, which is why our capitalist society produces an environment which is dominated by the fragmentary and the homogeneous. Instead of the things that a city ought to provide, things to which Lefebvre believed people are entitled, such as an urban fabric, interrelations, diversity and encounters – things that were once so typical of life in an urban centre – the influence of modernist urban planning has meant that what we get is separation, monotony and isolation. Think for example of Le Corbusier. For capitalism follows the law of reproducibility, repetition and mass production, even in building. 'Small wonder all new suburbs look the same.' For Lefebvre it followed that if you want to change society you have to change space.

Options for Opposition

During the first 'Camp for Oppositional Architecture', which took place in Berlin in 2004, Peter Marcuse, architect and professor at Columbia University, suggested two possibilities for opposition within architecture. The first option was for architects and urban planners to choose their clients and their associated interests more carefully, on the assumption that you would be extremely unlikely to carry on an oppositional form of architecture if you were working for McDonalds. As an extension to this, Marcuse also suggested that architects could go to work as volunteers, for example for neighbourhood groups, with lack of income as a possible consequence. The second possibility that Marcuse saw was to completely embrace the oppositional attitude and subsequently launch the revolution from within the architectural establishment.

It should be possible to add a third option, namely for architects and urban designers to demonstrate to a more general audience that they have the power to produce their own environment. This approach would avoid the public being presented the alternative as a given. Moreover, in this way the public would come into possession of the critical instruments they would need to themselves propose alternatives.

But what can be done when this public space, too, is seen as increasingly sinister? Where perhaps once there were road signs, signposting and later closed-circuit television cameras which directed, structured and recorded our everyday audible and visible life in the city, now there are walls and fences. Thus the city itself, its architecture and its 'individual character', seem slowly but surely to be becoming completely inward directed. Outside the wall public life goes on, encounters between individuals take place and thoughts and disagreements are exchanged. It is here that we must contrive to orient ourselves and maintain ourselves within the anonymous, unemotional, expressionless, that nonetheless knows in spiteful detail how to shut in, but more especially how to shut out.

In this respect it is interesting to consider the work of the Louvain professor and philosopher Rudi Visker (b. 1959). Visker's thinking followed the lines set out by the Jewish German philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-1975). Arendt drew attention to the problem of the traditional idea that a community consists of a group of people who share a particular property – for example a religion, belief or race. This view of a community assumes a certain naturalness or unity and is characterized by a homogeneity which forces people into unification and unanimity. Difference, individual perceptions of reality and plurality become impossible. Arendt warned against both this 'assimilation' and an excessively liberal individualism. As distinct from the traditional idea of a community she proposed a communal world in which speaking and acting in the public domain constantly makes it possible to work on this construct. Here speaking and acting is not so much a matter of understanding the other as a person, but more of understanding the other person's perception of reality, in part because our own experience of reality depends on it. According to Arendt it is precisely within this exchange of perceptions that community is brought into being, but without differences being abolished. Difference and plurality need public space as a vehicle if they are to be seen, heard and enjoyed.

In his book *Vreemd gaan en vreemd blijven. Filosofie van de multiculturaliteit* [Becoming Foreign and Staying Foreign. A Philosophy of Multiculturalism] Rudi Visker proposes no longer setting up public space as somewhere neutral, where consensus rules, but rather as somewhere where differences, even if irreconcilable, can take spatial form and so become visible[3]. He reached this view through an analysis of the term 'individuality'. As indicated by the book's subtitle, Visker focussed specifically on multiculturalism. This might also be taken more widely and applied to groups and individuals in society who distinguish themselves not only by race or nationality but also by sex, income or some other characteristic. Individuality, said Visker, is absolutely not something that we understand or grasp. We may for example identify ourselves as Dutch or female, but on closer inspection it is unclear what precisely that implies. Individuality is not so much something that we own, but something that has us in its grip, something to which we hardly have access, which we become confronted with in an encounter with someone else. Things that for some reason or other are significant to us may mean nothing at all to someone else. And it is just this encounter with differences that we do not understand, things that we cannot cope with and find painful, that turns individuality into something oppressive or alienating; something that acts as an identification, but also as a annoyance. What Visker proposed was that we stop using public space as somewhere to make cautious attempts to resolve these differences by consensus, but as somewhere to deal with these differences spatially. 'Spatializing' differences keeps

3. Rudi Visker, *Vreemd gaan en vreemd blijven. Filosofie van de multiculturaliteit* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2005).

them apart, but does not push them away from one another. The intervening space – the space between good and evil, blue and black, individual and collective – which then develops provides a place where things become possible, where dialogue becomes possible, where people can unite with one another.

Conflictual Participation

During the second 'Camp for Oppositional Architecture', London architect and researcher Markus Miessen gave a presentation entitled 'The Violence of Participation. Spatial Practices Beyond Models of Consensus'. Miessen argued in favour of ceasing to regard participation as something based on romantic ideals of harmony and solidarity, but instead as a platform for the kind of critical engagement that he termed 'conflictual participation'. In this connection 'conflict' should not be taken to suggest protest or provocation, but as a practice allowing the participant to play an active role which goes much further than that offered by models of consensus. Viewed in this way, conflict can also act as an 'agent' to achieve a productive environment. Here Miessen sees a role for the architect and urban designer. In his opinion, these people too often have to act as a kind of service provider delivering a product, rather than as a participant in an already established field of influence. A participant is in a better position to introduce friction and difference into already existing power structures because he or she is also an 'outsider´.

Architects and urban designers who do not fight shy of conflict, together with a public which has access to the tools it needs to shape its own environment and its own individuality, may perhaps be in a position to free the public domain from the yoke of anonymity, repetition and introversion created by consensus. Perhaps they may be able to turn architecture round to face the outside world, to let itself happen in public and so give encounters, interactions and differences of opinion a spatial significance and expression. For to be honest, the *gated community*, the enclosing wall, the necessity of community, is really much too heavy and dangerous a burden. Let's go play!

Jo van der Spek

From Outcast to Broadcast

Charis SIL

Tout vrai langage est incompréhensible.
A. Artaud

My Field of Activity

My field of activity is migration and communication. My practice ranges from squatters' newspaper to streamtime and the Vertrokken Gezichten (Departed Faces) campaign, and extends all the way from Guatemala to Kabul, from Musselkanaal to Basra and Bukavu. I call myself a world citizen, partly because I have twice lived as a migrant, in Barcelona and in Zagreb.

I became aware of the power of the word as a radio producer. I became aware of the power of the deed as a squatter and travelling media activist. And I learned to know the power of the human gaze by standing with the survivors of the Schiphol fire and seeing their treatment and the Netherlands through their eyes. By joining them in arranging a commemoration ceremony at the fences of their prison in Schiphol East. And I discovered how good people in the Netherlands are perfectly capable of looking away from things. Perhaps because of impotence? And how those professionally involved are good at seeing migrants as victims or suspects, as patients or swindlers, as pests or pets. Instead I set myself the task to 'Look WITH us, not AT us'. See through our eyes.

Last summer the crew of Streamtime sat in a back garden in Amsterdam thinking about how to progress our attempts to open free channels of communications with Iraq. More and more bloggers and other contacts in Iraq have decided to leave Iraq, many of them are seeking refuge in the free West. The most important decision that we took was to move over to a hospitality offensive. We wanted to call our Iraqi friends as welcome as the Americans were in March 2003 and as the Vertrokken Gezichten campaigners were in Musselkanaal, not just on our website, but in our houses and in our lives.

I still wonder how you can really communicate with people in Baghdad or Kirkuk. How one day we will be able to look one another in the eye. And if we can't go to them, let them come to us.

And now I want more: I want to make a point about the invasion of the Netherlands. And of IJburg in particular. Don't say I didn't warn you.

My Confrontation

We could not understand, because we were too far and could not remember, because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign – and no memories.
Joseph Conrad

On 26 October 2005 the Netherlands was startled by the Schiphol fire: we saw ghostly figures of illegal immigrants wrapped in sheets moving through the flames in an outdoor cage. Eleven of them were missing: their cell doors stayed shut: smoke filled the space and put out the light.

A year later a few hundred people stood in silence through the night on the same spot, in front of the fence. Survivors of the fire were there too. For the whole night we confronted the phenomenon of the detention of immigrants: fences 5 m high, searchlights, a locked gate and a crowd of nervous guards. And the survivors confronted us with their experience, their feelings. They took over the space on the small podium, cursed the system and demanded recognition of their humanity.

As campaigner in the field of migration and globalization for the X-Y Solidarity Fund, I was deeply involved in the organization of the commemoration ceremony. The ceremony was the climax of a political campaign in which the idea of solidarity was put into practice on all sorts of levels: in the form of a website, posters, cards, flyers, publications in mainstream media and an unsuccessful stream. But most of all by long frequent visits to the survivors' headquarters, the Musselkanaal asylum seekers centre. We – mostly women – turned up there each week and slept there a number of nights. The COA (Central organ for the reception of asylum seekers) still wonders what actually went on there. In any case the result was that almost all the survivors came by bus to Amsterdam to take part in the commemoration ceremony.

Thus as seen by X-Y the whole thing was a political campaign against the phenomenon of the detention of immigrants, and for the rights of migrants.

'The Schiphol fire was the low point in 20 years of immigration policy; our aim was to make it a turning point. We showed that immigrants can be treated differently: we stood with the survivors and the relatives and went on with our lives. We also showed that the fire was not something that came out of thin air. The Schiphol fire was the direct consequence of an immigration policy in which economy – illegals must be chucked out of the country as quickly and cheaply as possible – was an important component.' (www.vertrokkengezichten.net)

But the commemoration ceremony was really mainly a public ritual, a ritual that included much input from radical religious quarters. There was no room for politicians on this holy ground. The message was not political but a piece of radical humanism: in spite of politics we were still there, we were alive and we demanded our rights and our freedom. And most of all, we refused to go on begging, to be humiliated and to become victims. 'The thing that doesn't kill you, makes you stronger'.

The force with which the survivors expressed themselves was greater than that of the dutiful pamphlets put out by the 'Generaal Pardonners' (supporters

of a general amnesty for asylum seekers under the old law), immigration workers and writers of complaining letters to the editor. What was really shattering was the contrast with the pathetic display round an illegible stone unveiled in the morning after the commemoration ceremony by the likes of Rita Verdonk.

What interests me is the kind of things that can happen in a meeting between, in this case, the survivors of a foreseeable catastrophe and the people who refused to look away from the way in which migrants are excluded, hounded and driven away. What interests me is the real thing: the kind of things I learn from Sakho and Babak and Cherrak. That there is a provider of a cheap phone service if you bump into the right African dealer. That you can refuse to move house to an out-of-the-way place like Musselkanaal. That you are burdened with the knowledge that you survived something that cost others their lives.

And what happens to you yourself, as a professional activist! When you stand holding on to a piece of wood which bears the name of a corpse, taking part in a quiet group of survivors. When you try to put yourself into the shoes of Ahmed Isa, the suspected arsonist who at that time was still in his cell. And how in the heat of this confrontation the slogan was born which became the continuing theme for the continuation of the campaign: Alle hekken weg! (Down with all fences!)

I suspect that the dynamism and so the force of the commemoration ceremony lay in a combination of the personal statement of the survivors and the political battle against a particular migration policy. Or in its solidarity, intensity and intimacy, all things which command respect.

My Invasion

The sovereign power of the commemoration ceremony was apparent from the fact that nobody had a word to say about the policy, the fact that apparently the riot police were caught so unawares that they failed to clear the vigil out of the way before those in authority came to do their thing, and from the visible result in the media in which the ministers were speechless and their pathetic stone was hidden behind posters in the form of a tricolour bearing the words Sour, Sweet, Bitter (one of which was held on high by a woman who had experienced the fire as one of the guards!). The radical quality lay in the occupation of the holy ground, in the placing of the wooden pillars as monuments, in the taking of the word, the setting of the image. Of course I too would have climbed over that fence, broken open those cells and razed the detention centre to the ground, if the survivors had gone on to do those things. It's sad, but without confrontation nothing happens.

A Poster Breaks into the Picture

The Vertrokken Gezichten campaign was emphatically also an attempt to attack existing images. The name of the campaign suggests dread, departure and migration, and dying. But how do you translate that? Various options were '*we burn migrants', 'leftwithnothing', 'passed-but-not-gone'?* (The best entry gets a kiss!) But it is also a challenge: widen your field of view, choose a different perspective, share a view, discover the migrant in yourself.

Politically speaking, the aim was to cause the maximum damage to the image of the state: the good name enjoyed by the Netherlands internationally was thrown away in the ashes of the detention centre. But another political aim, at least as important, was to break through the rigid attitudes of the campaigners/relief workers involved in the fate of one or more asylum seekers.

Bye-bye Rita

They came from Sierra Leone, they came from Utrecht, the press raced to the spot (Business News Radio), the police came on horseback, disaster tourists and ghouls, no less than 20 people defied the storm and bade a festive farewell to the policy of Holland in general and of Rita Verdonk in particular. She herself was nowhere to be seen.

A frontier is not just a matter of language, but surely also of looking, touching and non-verbal encounters. That is more obvious on the work floor, under the shower or in the disco than in the service sector or in political debate.

Workers at policy level see influx and underprivileged groups, bureaucrats see formulas and flowcharts. Dehumanization is reasonably far advanced in the Netherlands. There's a chilling fact.

But even well-meaning Dutchmen can be a bit chilly. One frequently occurring expression is 'slachtofferdenken' (defining someone as a victim) a way of thinking that is only too eager to become internalized. 'We almost always lose, therefore we must be in the right' becomes an expression of moral superiority on the part of the loser who becomes addicted to loss, from a misplaced identification with the victims. Huub Oosterhuis, the high priest of the Socialist Party, stands up for asylum seekers because they are defenceless. But that is not the case: if they really were defenceless they would never have made it to the Netherlands. No, they were *made* defenceless. The *Schiphol people*, as Papa Sakho calls them, are not victims but survivors, sometimes even activists. To quote Babak: 'We are still alive but are not really living. I am still around but now I take ten pills a day. Is this freedom?'

And how pure really is this group of well-meaning people, why have they simply no appreciation of the link between immigration policy and racism, or the connection with economic relationships in an era of globalization?

And what would happen if we were to ask designers in the Netherlands to design a poster to serve as a memorial of the Schiphol fire? To answer this question, the campaign held a competition challenging the designers in the following terms:

We are holding this poster competition to create an image to remind people of the Schiphol fire. Image makers can not escape the decision whether to contribute to the solution of social, economic, cultural or even political problems. How as image maker do you relate to all the stuff provided by the media? What role will your poster play in the media landscape!

Our challenge to designers and graphic artists is to herald a new style, a new era of political posters!

Besides a poster, entrants were also asked to produce a logo, because the exercise simply wouldn't work without a logo. The jury was flooded with entries (about 60) and the first thing that struck them was the enormous diversity. This made it simple to throw out all clichés in advance. This left 20 designs, which were rewarded with a 'plot' [a special sort of print, ed.]. These 'plots' were exposed in Imagine IC, Dominicuskerk, De Rode Hoed. The jury finally had to choose between two potential winners, which led to an interesting discussion about the relationship between the autonomous power of an image and a political message. Not surprisingly, the result was ambiguous: the logo did not become the winning poster and the winning design determined the image that appeared in the media.

Selby Gildenmacher's design won thanks to its appropriation of the National tricolour, its appeal to taste (or aftertaste) and its direct reference to a cabinet slogan (after the sour comes the sweet) which also made it suitable as an election poster.

This was most clearly apparent at the 'First Great Commemoration' of the Schiphol fire on 26 and 27 October 2006. An extract from the appeal:

It has to be an assembly demonstrating the solidarity of all those affected by the fire, by the policy and by the politics of exclusion. And a burning protest against the detention of immigrants in any form whatsoever.

The commemoration ceremony attracted a good deal of attention from radio and television and in the press. This attention was more than ritual, thanks largely to the current political situation: the committee of investigation had placed the responsibility clearly with the cabinet, two ministers had resigned and the government had fallen. Moreover it seemed that at the last minute the cabinet had had second thoughts about making its own contribution, and had the late Rita Verdonk and old-timer Hirsch Ballin furtively unveil a memorial stone near the prison complex.

The media were mainly interested in the service in the Dominicuskerk in the centre of Amsterdam. Apparently attending the nocturnal vigil by the fences at Schiphol East was too much to ask, or too much trouble. But when it got light and the ministers turned up, the reporters woke up. And then the power of the poster as a political image became apparent: the silent ministers standing miserably on a piece of turf by a pathetically illegible stone were totally outdone in the news programme by the last watchers who unrolled the posters in front of the cameras and blocked from view the empty gesture being made behind them.

So the poster worked! But in my opinion this was mainly because of the way in which it was deliberately fed to the media by the activists. The 'old' images, the 11 wooden columns representing the 11 dead, never got into the picture, while I believe that their strength, embraced by night by the survivors, was in no way inferior to that of the logo or poster. Stronger still, those columns will go on living a life of their own. Just wait and see.

It is typical that the transient, national and verbal image of the poster triumphed over the pictorial, durable and internationally usable design used as the logo. Did this design reclaim the political poster as an exponent of artistic engagement? Yes, but only as part of a torrent of images: by turning up everywhere. And by literally forcing its way into the collective imagination.

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http://www.vertrokkengezichten.net

http://www.xs4all.nl/%7Ejo/anderwerk.html

http://streamtime.org

Flyer

The wake held near the detention centre at Schiphol-Oost in the night of 26-27 October 2006. Photo by commandante Azalea

Transparadiso: Barbara Holub, Paul Rajakovics, Bernd Vlay

On *Direct Urbanism* and the Art of Parallel Strategies

Apple Garamond

Urban designers, developers, city authorities and other experts charged with the development of cities and sites understand very well how to use art projects to their own advantage. These are primarily art projects in public space that are intended to guide the development of new urban areas that are 'without pre-identity' or whose pre-identity is undesirable for the image and the future programming of the area. Many artistic practices have addressed this and therefore have developed a critical contribution to the discussion on urban development. This, however, does not absolve urban designers and city authorities of their responsibilities in this regard.

Direct urbanism expresses the need to adopt a position, even over the medium and the long term.

Direct urbanism employs tactical interventions and strategic thinking. It also considers planning as a participatory principle and places the emphasis on the complexity of the situation and the responsibility of all involved, including residents. The urban design intervention encompasses a wide range of possibilities – both long- and short-term. It is therefore necessary to develop specific instruments, along with new conditions for a continual review of methodologies and approaches that create a network of parallel strategies. The methodology of *direct urbanism* is applied in situations in which the goal is not immediately clear and in which the work of the architect/urban designer dovetails with open-ended processes inherent to artistic practices that deal with the public domain.

Direct urbanism promotes a macro-utopia: it operates by employing an 'anticipatory fiction' that allows for latent, hidden visions we usually ignore due to self-censorship. The conflicting interests of the various groups involved are used to develop a design practice geared to conflicts, whose first mission is to produce a psycho-cartography of divergent ideals and role models.

Direct urbanism could also be considered a third layer between urban planning and urban design.

The Necessity and Redundancy of Intervention

The publication of the exhibition 'The Interventionists' at MASS MoCa (2004) is subtitled *User's Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life*, aptly characterizing one aspect of artistic practices that work outside institutions.

The necessity of intervention applies in a range of different situations, from 'urgent cases', in which immediate action must be taken (sometimes by invitation, sometimes self-initiated), to self-selected issues or objectives that result in self-initiated long-term projects. Sometimes it is even better to 'do nothing' except explicitly make room (in a spatial and programmatic sense) for future developments that cannot be anticipated or mapped out in full at the time.

Transparadiso's practice navigates between architecture, art and urban design. It has endeavoured to develop new approaches and instruments to bridge the gap between artistic intervention (with its often limited visibility as a result of the context of a temporary venue and/or a temporary or specific audience) and the urban design strategies that have been controlled by financial interests for quite some time. This is what we call *direct urbanism*, an elaboration of Guy Debord's 'unitarian urbanism'.

Instruments

Indikatormobil

Transparadiso began developing the 'Indikatormobil' in 2002. A prototype has been in use as an 'urban emergency vehicle' since 2004. Taking into account the reality of privatized urban design, it could be considered a post-urban 'real-space survival instrument', negotiating an uncertain terrain, challenging it without losing sight of its plan. It is driven through badly designed areas or through areas saddled solely with obvious (market-oriented) solutions, shows up in unexpected contexts where it develops survival strategies and poetic moments and disrupts rigid structures in order to create new space for action and appropriation. It offers relief in situations of perceived 'unfriendly planning' that ignore the social production of space and serves as a vehicle for research through action. It is a flexible instrument of *direct urbanism* and makes use of 'direct communication' resources, including a collapsible bar, video camera and a screen for real-time projection.[1]

1. 'Seine Evidenz' (Wiener Linien, Vienna Museum, Vienna, 2004); *I-Scene-Shifter* (One in a Million, Austrian Cultural Forum, New York, 2004); *Impeccable* (Radical Positionings, Pavelhaus/Laafeld, Austria, 2004); *Wunschfreistellung schlüsselfertig* (Trichtlinnburg, Salzburg 2005; EU project with Salzburger Kunstverein/Initiative Architektur, Centre for Contemporary Art, Tallin, Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht).

Soothing Table

One or more geometrically modified wall-papering tables (Soothing Tables) are set up in the relevant area in order to display a future structure that, at that moment, still resembles a fiction. However, the Soothing Table is also a table that invites conversations and negotiations. The Soother is a supervisor, and everyone who has experienced a conflict or fiery discussion in the course of an urban design project can turn to her/him. The Soothing Table promotes offensive relief: the moment exciting strategies are in danger of stagnation because the need to survive drives them to it, it provides an alert detachment in its place, which helps uncover new possibilities.[2]

2. 'plan b' (Köflach/Voitsberg, Austria); *young blood* (Centre for Central European Architecture, Prague; Stadtmuseum Graz); *Het Blauwe Huis* (IJburg/Amsterdam).

Soothing Table, prototype with, above, a photo showing the table deployed on location

Direct urbanism, diagram, 2006

Anticipatory Fiction

As a new conceptual and action instrument, ***direct urbanism*** is developing the model of a 'macro-Utopia', using the tactical resources of 'anticipatory fiction'. Where self-censorship would otherwise impose pre-set limits on potential new programming, 'anticipatory fiction' makes room for the hidden and latent visions of different groups of actors. The conflicting interests are seen here as the actual potential of a practice that is geared to conflict, the first building mission of which is a psycho-cartography of various role models.[3]

3. 'a little too far ahead of its time' (Media Workshop Vienna, 2006; okto tv, 2007).

Retrofiction

Retrofiction does not mean wallowing in nostalgic remembrances, but developing visions for the future based on visions from the past. It means avoiding purely material fetishism, as employed both in art in recent years and in the inexhaustible discussions of utopias from the past, because a fiction of a new premise is available. Retrofiction describes a situation as it might have been. This is an aesthetic scenario of the past that can be used as material for a vision of the future.

Reappreciation

The production of a new 'raw material' out of something that already exists, which offers a new point of departure of increased quality.

Macro-Utopia

Today, a utopia – as a comprehensive vision – can only be conceived in light of the machinations of its authors. The term 'macro-utopia', however, describes the modest initial stages of latent 'utopias' (the nuclei of utopias). These only become relevant through collective actions and desires, and so become the impetus for transformation in their own right. Unlike 'micro', 'macro' involves an inductive movement that may even extend a concrete situation to regional planning, for example, or a situation like that in Köflach.[4]

4. 'plan b' (Köflach/ Voitsberg, Austria, year ? 2006?).

– The Want is the desire or yearning for a thing or a competence, the striving or at least the hope for a transformation of reality or the attainment of an objective for oneself or for others. (Wikipedia)

– A Utopia might be an unreal, virtual space as a want for perfect societal relations in reality.

– A Concrete Utopia (after Ernst Bloch) might be the process of realizing a utopia, in which future objectives would be presented as experimental. This demands a radical optimism that vanished in 1989.

– A Dystopia might be a history of a fictional society that has evolved negatively without any hope of breaking free of its totalitarian power relations. It is the antithesis of a utopia.
– Heterotopias, according to Foucault, are 'other places' or 'counter-places', actually realized utopias in which the actual places within culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted. They are marginal places, but they can nevertheless be defined with precision.

Actions

Room for Wants – Ready for Occupancy
Along with the 'Initiative Architektur', several owners of vacant shops in the left half of the old town of Salzburg, in cooperation with the municipal marketing department, were persuaded to reach a turning point in their thinking. They began to see non-occupancy as potential instead of as a stigma. Temporarily, therefore, the shops were no longer considered as economic consumer items. For a time, posters transformed the properties into the 'façades' of a future with 'vision'. Non-occupancy was thus identified as a reserve for the city and thus became a projection screen for the wants of the participants in the project. The 'Indikatormobil' was on site to distribute keys to the vacant shops (without the corresponding addresses). If the key did not fit, 'spies' stationed by the buildings to provide assistance smuggled the participants into the shop for a short time. The non-occupancy was presented in a video. Voices whispered wants, so that the listeners – assisted by specialists – could develop their personal as well as their collective wants.[5]

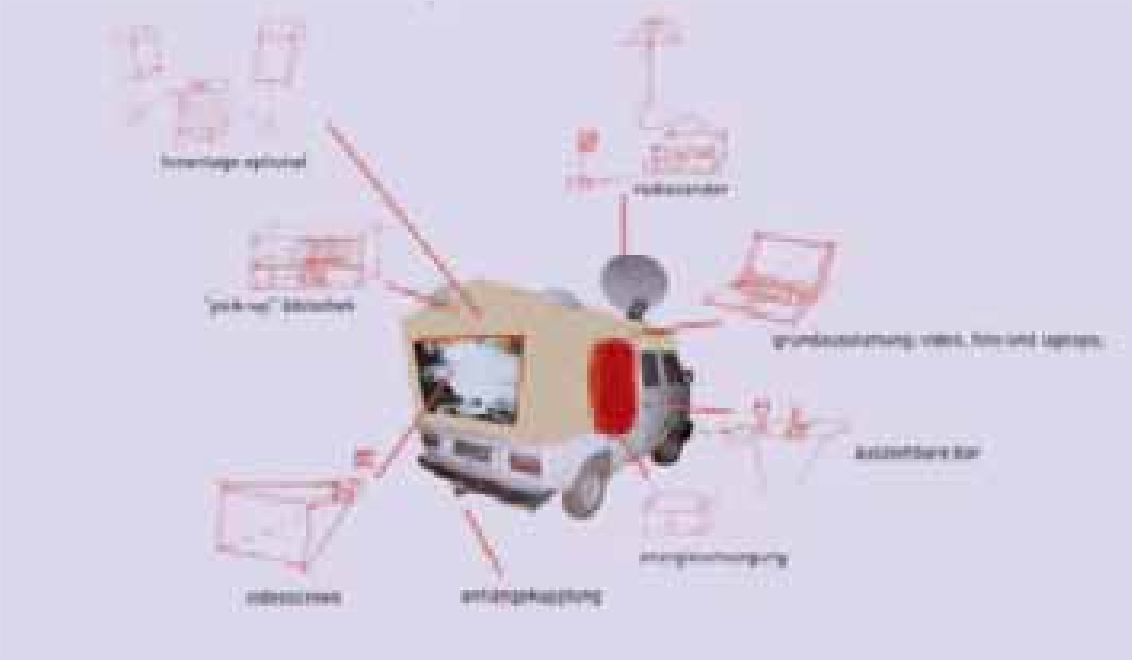
5. 'Trichtlinnburg', Salzburg, 2005.

plan b
'If Plan A fails, Plan B comes into effect.'
'plan b' began with an invitation to 'Talking Cities' in the Kokerei in Essen. We chose an Austrian model for comparison, the deserted industrial area of Köflach/Voitsberg. What is taking place here is symptomatic of the situation in many former industrial areas throughout Europe, from Birmingham to the Ruhr to Steiermark. They are all undergoing far-reaching structural transformations. The search for solutions to the loss of employment and identity in these areas leads to concepts that mainly attempt to develop a new future through tourism, culture and the leisure industry.

The starting point for 'plan b' is marked by a traumatic, but highly inspiring, crucial question: How do we resolve the paradox between the current booming demand for utopias and the great economic pressure? How do we develop new forms of collective action?

Plan b, panorama Köflach/Voitsberg

Indikator, concept



a little too far ahead of its time

For the Media Workshop Vienna we set up a retrofictional studio (equipped with two analogue editing stations) intended to transpose the formulation of 'plan b' to the media discourse. For this we resurrected the potential of *Max Headroom*, which had sunk into oblivion (and even in 1986, when it was broadcast as a TV series, was only seen by a tiny niche audience). *Max Headroom* anticipated the societal developments as well as the production and reception conditions of 2006 in detail, something that inspired us to plumb these situations of urban dystopia, which have long since become reality, for new visions.[6]

6. 'Das Alte, das Neue' (Media Workshop Vienna, 2006; okto tv, 2007).

For more information, see www.transparadiso.com

m7red: Florencia Alvarez, Mauricio Corbalan, Pio Torroja

Post Resilience

Linux Libertine O

From 2000 to 2003, a series of unpredictable changes took place in Argentina; many people had to deal with an extreme degree of economic and social exclusion, which radically altered the way they lived. Since then, according to the media and certain indicators, the situation in the country has been normalized and things have returned to the way they used to be. There is a democratically elected government and the poverty and unemployment figures have returned to pre-crisis levels. This apparent normalization brings us to the concept of resilience. In mechanical terms, resilience is a material's ability to be temporarily deformed without undergoing permanent alteration. In psychology, resilience refers to a person or group's ability to continue to project itself into the future despite destabilizing events, difficult situations or sometimes even serious traumas. The normalization of Argentina seems to demonstrate that the nation-state, with its institutional structure, is a resilient machine.

In reality, however, a subtle and somewhat abstract alteration *has* taken place. According to Argentine historian Ignacio Lewkowicz, the situation may seem to have returned to normal, but thinking patterns have been irretrievably altered. The situation has lost its resilience. The experience of those two years have shown us that unforeseen (and risky) socio-political configurations can suddenly emerge, that conditions of existence can be modified and that these modifications can be immense and far-reaching.

In an attempt to regain a grasp of the situation, we might localize the configurations, modifications and political situations that emerged during the crisis within public space and its attendant logic. But first we would have to revise the accepted idea of public space. We wish to consider it in relation to the Argentine crisis. Was this not a crisis of public space? What happens to the idea of public space when the things that take place within it cease to be predictable, when there are no longer any regular or reproducible parameters to define, reproduce and connect public space to other 'institutions'? Does public space even still exist under such circumstances?

One way of describing public space is to say that its existence depends on the state – not the state as an entity or a government, but rather as a logic, the logic of the state, a specific way of thinking and acting: the state as the network that links all institutions. The Argentine crisis has made us realize that the modern state in the sense of an existential logic can fall into decline or even disappear (at least for a few days or hours), even when the state as an institution or 'meta-institution' continues to exist. Even when the state as a system of law is still in effect and its institutions are still operating, it is possible for the logic of the state to cease functioning as a way of thinking, as a 'way of producing reality'.

The crisis has shown us that there is more than one way of producing reality and that these productions of reality are not coordinated by a single, overarching logic like that of the state. It is more a question of productions of

layered realities that either are connected or ignore one another, collide with one another or create one another, involving forces that can be part of several processes of reality production at the same time. Even the network of laws and regulations that links all the political, social and economic operations of the state is one such force. In a certain sense, we could say that there is no pre-established law and reality for everyone. This plurality is not a question of multiculturalism or the coexistence of divergent lifestyles. It is rather a relationship among forces within a changing and fairly unpredictable environment. According to some Argentine thinkers, public space has mutated into a space in which change has attained primacy over stability. This situation is not limited to Argentina: it is a global phenomenon.

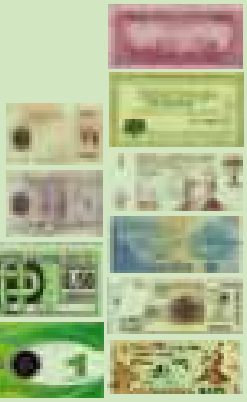
Barter Club

Social relations in neo-liberalism are based entirely on trust . . . but let us not confuse this with a friendly image of trust; we are talking about a desperate trust . . . a trust that has to be renewed in every specific situation.
Ignacio Lewkowicz

During the crisis in Argentina, a large number of barter clubs were set up. A barter club is a sort of civil organization based on the idea of self-help. The system is part of the 'third sector', that is to say at the margins of the regular economy and the social policy of the state. Barter clubs have their own currency and credit system, making numerous, non-simultaneous transactions possible without the use of a legal currency. This currency is private because it is issued by private individuals and is not guaranteed by the state; it is not a legally valid document. It generates no interest and therefore is not intended as a store of value, but simply as a means of exchange. Any product and any service can be bartered, and each 'prosumer' (a neologism derived from 'producer' and 'consumer' – in Spanish, *prosumidor*) has an obligation to offer something at the barter club.

In the early 1990s, Argentina made its debut in globalization; it was not in a solid position to do so, and unemployment followed. The barter club initiators theorized that strengthening the domestic economy and ecology would make it possible to do something about the massive levels of unemployment and the decline of industries that had hitherto been considered 'permanent' (such as the steel and textile industries). Out of the idea of a 'protected market' came the idea of the barter club, a 'solidarity market' in which transactions that were impossible in the official market could take place. The idea was not to replace the market but to supplement it, in hopes of finding new ideas for improving the economy in the future.

1991
The Convertibility law was an economic reform impulsed by the government during the 90's. Argentina's currency board established a fixed pegging of one-to-one parity between the peso and the dollar and it also guaranteed full convertibility of pesos into dollars. Its main achievement was in controlling inflation, which was brought down from more than 3,000% in 1989 to 3.4% in 1994. But there were also negative side effects such as increased unemployment, unequal income distribution, increased poverty levels and decreased wage rates.



1996
The first subsidies (called "Planes Trabajar") were created by the government. These "plans" were offered as temporary jobs for unemployed people.

MARCH 2001
The capital flight from banks began.

JUNE 2001
The government asked for financial help from the foreign banks and the IMF in order to reduce the pressure the foreign debt was putting on the economy.

JULY 2001
The "economic emergency law" was enacted by decree. Thanks to it, the government began to issue emergency bonds. These were created to develop "complementary currencies" to cover the growing currency gap ...

... in the economy. Every province could issue its own bonds; around fifteen complementary currencies were produced during those years.

DECEMBER 3 2001
Corralito.
By decree, the government limited the amount of money that could be withdrawn from bank accounts. Its aim was to stop the capital flight and avoid any type of speculation related to the end of the convertibility rule, which had pegged the Argentine peso to the dollar. These measures severely restricted cash flow, ...

... putting an end to credit and suffocating the "informal economy" and, hence, destroying the everyday subsistence of a large part of the population.

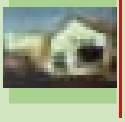
DECEMBER 19 2001
12.00 hs The first lootings in supermarkets and small shops began in some areas around Buenos Aires.
20.00 hs The government announced a "state of siege" because of the lootings.
20.15 hs That night, soon after the announcement of the state of siege, people poured onto the streets of Buenos Aires and other cities .

1.2% 1.9% 5.6% 7.4% 10.6% 17.6% 18.1%
2.7% 3.8% 5.1% 8.4%
1800 1384

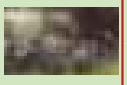
1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001

1 17 40 83 200 400 516

MAY 1ST 1995
The first "barter club" opened in a small garage in Bernal, in the outskirts of Bs. As.



JUNE 1996
The first "piquetes" were held on Route 22 in the Neuquen province. Former gas and oil industry workers blocked the route for many days.



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APRIL 1997
What are now called the "Piqueteros", joined by teachers, pupils and civil servants from Neuquen, blocked the route again. This time they were suppressed by the local police.

Another "piquetero" organization called MTL (Territorial Liberation Movement) began to take part in the invasion of properties in the outskirts of Bs. As.

1998
"Bola de nieve"- a website where artists engage in exchanges - starts.

33

More than 200 barter clubs across the country

257

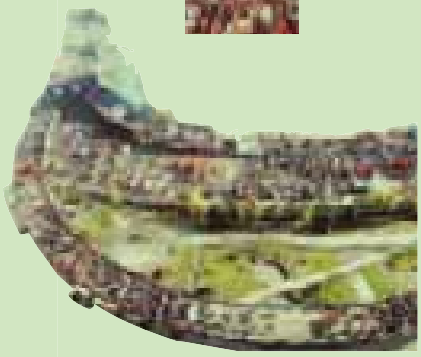
were part of the Red Global del Trueque (Global Barter Network). 30,000 prosumers (producers and consumers) and 120,000 people involved.

2000
More than 516 routes were blocked to protest rising unemployment. One of the aims of these blockades was to demand government subsidies, which had been cut.

2001
"Placidos domingos", a series of meetings between artists, economists and philosophers to discuss and reflect on the conceptual basis for the "Venus Project".

JULY 2001
First "piquetero" national meeting.
The encounter proposed a national campaign to stop impotent capitalist governments and replace them with constituent's assemblies at a national, provincial and county level.

OCTOBER 2001
Voters' general strike.
During the campaign before congressional elections, many people called for civil disobedience in the form of not voting or casting a "blank ballot."



DECEMBER 20 2001
3.00 HS. The minister of economy resigned.
12.00 HS Some people were still demonstrating in Plaza de Mayo when mounted police used excessive violence to force them to disperse by mean of excessive violence. This was broadcast live and many political groups and ordinary citizens converged on the spot. As the hours passed, more people joined the protest, crowding into the city centre.
19.00HS The president resigned.

JANUARY 2002
The former president resigned when his term was to last two more years.
He was followed by three provisional presidents in a week, none of whom could stabilize the situation. On January 2 the congress chose a former presidential candidate to end the mandate.

JANUARY 6 2002
The new president declares a state of emergency in relation to food, health and employment and established the "Plan jefas y jefes de hogar", the first mass social assistance plan in Latin America.

MARCH 2002
Rudi Dornbusch, the favorite advisor to the investment banks, proposed intervening in the Argentinean government with a team of foreigner experts to control critical areas such as public spending, currency emission and tax administration.

AUGUST 2002
Unemployment reached the highest rate in Argentinean history.
21.5 % of the population were unemployed and 18.6% were undemployed.

DECEMBER 2 2002
The end of the "corralito" occurred when the ministry of economy announced the release of deposits of up to 21,000 million pesos.

MARCH 2003
The end of use of 8 provincial bonds was announced by the government as part of a deal with the IMF, reducing to 3 the number of complementary currencies circulating at the end of that year.

APRIL 2003
Kirchner is elected president by ballotage.

57.4% MOBILE PHONE DENSITY
21.500.000 mobiles
37.000.000 inhabitants

28% INTERNET USERS
10.320.000 users
37.000.000 inhabitants

5000 NODES - RGT
2.500.000 prosumers
8 million people conected

2336 ROUTES BLOCKED

35.3%
20.7%
17.5%
13.4%
20.3%
14.4%

15 people died that day in Buenos Aires and other cities.

Thirty-nine popular assemblies appeared in the city of Bs. As.

JANUARY 6 2002
The convertibility model that ruled the economy for the last ten years is over.

2006
The province of Buenos Aires began to collect the last emergency bonds still in the market. Just 48 million pesos.

1550
1278
1181
1025
827

2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006

1 · 300 · 90 · 57

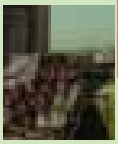
DECEMBER 19 2001
The first "popular assembly" gathered that night in a Buenos Aires neighborhood. This was a reaction to the decreed state of siege. The first week 10 people participated in the assembly, then 60 and, one week later, around 120.

JANUARY 2002
The "Argentinean Dialogue Board" was an experimental forum called by the new president in order to find consensus among businessmen, social actors, union workers and politicians from the whole country. Those in charge to coordinate the ideas exchange meetings and debates were representants of the Catholic Church with the technical assistance of a United Nations' program. (PNUD).

JANUARY 2002
The first "inter-neighborhood" meeting of popular assemblies was held in a park in Bs. As.

MARCH 2002
The Project Venus website is launched, and the "venus" currency began to circulate among members of the network.

JUNE 2002
A piqueteros blockade into many highways into the city of Buenos Aires was fiercely repressed by the police; two members of the piqueteros organization MTD were killed during the persecution. After these events, President Duhalde called general elections for April, 2003.



JULY 2002
The Guggenheim foundation awards the Venus Project a 45,000 dollar subsidy.

AUGUST 2002
Opening of "Tatlin", the first physical node in the Venus Project. A member of the network lent a building of his own to be used for developing temporary collective experiments.

SEPTEMBER 2002
"Collapse of a system" was an economical and political scenario projection game based on an eventual crisis in the Venus network. Two sessions open to all the Venus members were held at Tatlin. node.

NOVEMBER 2002
"Multiplicity", a global meeting of self-managed networks held at Tatlin.

DECEMBER 2002
The members of venus were called to a competition for "Shared projects". The selected entries were cast by vote between all the members. The total amount of money delivered for the subsidy was 12.000 venus and 12.000 pesos.

DECEMBER 2002
Closing of the Tatlin node.

MAY 2003
The strategies of the new president produced major shifts within the piquetero organizations. Most of them have reduced its members and the amount of social assistance plans they ask for.

JUNE 4 2003
The first Venus bank opened. Its aim was to fund shared projects in the Venus currency.

OCTOBER 2003
The MTL bought a lot in the city of Buenos Aires with a credit extended by a government housing agency. The cooperative Emetele is formed in order to build a complex for 300 MTL-members' families while giving jobs to 210 unemployed people.

2004
The piquetero movement is divided. Some piquetero leaders began to distribute the subsidies to the members according to their level of participation in rallies and blockades. At the same time, some leaders negotiate subsidies directly with the local party bosses and the government.

2004
"Experimental societies" was a "temporary autonomous zone" created to elaborate protocols for social linking and utopian thinking.

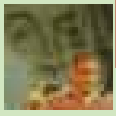
OCTOBER 2005
Reopening of a mining company by the Cooperative MTL La Brava. Its participants were ex-mine workers and unemployed people. They produce minerals for export..

2005
The Venus website has more than 20,000 visitors per month.

2005
The piquetero cooperative EMETELE, formed a building company to operate on the open construction market, and was contracted by a major firm to build a housing complex.

2006
According to the RGT, there are only 57 barter clubs operating in Argentina.

2006
The "official" piqueteros take part in some ministry of welfare and the foreign affaire office. The moderated ones took distance from the government while promoting partial route blockades and protests. Others consider ended the fight for subsidies and work on projects of their own.



JULY 2006
The "Barrios de Pie" piquetero group opened its website and provided free internet access to all of its members and users in general.

SEPTEMBER 2006
A cybercafé is opened by the Buenos Aires city government to provide cheap internet access to all street children. Most of them use their spare change to pay for internet access.

DECEMBER 2006
The Start foundation announced the end of the Venus project after six years of experiments.

Before and during the crisis, large segments of the Argentine population were excluded from the mainstream economic and monetary systems because they had neither work nor income. Their access to money, normally the only means of exchange, was extremely restricted. On the one hand were unsatisfied needs and on the other skills and labour potential that were not being utilized due to a lack of demand. What was missing was a social and monetary intermediary to bring them together.

From 1999 to 2002 almost everything was available at the barter clubs (food, used and homemade articles, as well as services like plumbing, masonry and health care). Merchants who had been forced to close their shops sold their products at the barter clubs and obtained new merchandize from them. Workers who were given their severances in products rather than cash brought what they had left over to the clubs. Barter clubs were autonomous organizations; they formed spontaneously and their structure was decentralized and non-hierarchical.

Barter clubs were the answer to problems that were the consequence of globalization. From the start, the system was meant to be self-sustaining and self-regulating, with organic intentions based on harmony. It was a non-governmental organization with great imagination in its scale and implementation, in significant contrast to the austerity of the economic policy prescribed by specialists. It proved so flexible, however, that at one point it involved more than six million people and became a victim of its own success. The organization turned into something very difficult to describe. A hybrid situation emerged. An excess of speculation, inflation and other more or less uncontrollable dynamics eventually burst the bubble.

The Venus Project

Political philosophy in the gym:
Theoretical and experimental gathering in a gym (with aerobics and weight machines). First item on the agenda: the institutional structures as experienced by society as a whole and by its component parts. Then a discussion of issues specifically related to bodybuilding, such as muscle gain based on weight training and aerobics. Ideally, the meeting lasts 80 minutes and is divided into three parts: 1) theory in the gym (40 minutes), 2) warm-up and 3) weight room, with a basic description of the exercises.[1]

1. http://proyectov.org/venus2/.

During the same period, the Venus project was set up, 'an experimental society, in which artists, scientists, technology experts and intellectuals come together in production and circulation circuits to explore new forms of creation and life . . .'[2] By setting up

2. From a message by Roberto Jacoby on the Venus project website, http://proyectov.org/venus2/.

interfaces or exchange networks, the Venus project, like many other organizations, developed a specific form of producing value or of revaluing things, operations and relationships during the Argentine crisis. They attempted to link the value of what was exchanged to the way in which these interfaces and networks produced their own reality. In the case of the barter clubs, this entailed revaluing a whole range of small-scale, domestic economic activities, so that they could be re-marketed. In the case of the Venus project, this entailed developing what they called the technology of friendship – that is to say, 'the art of connecting people. Or of putting together networks, of crossing symbolic frontiers, of multiplying opportunities for encounters', whereby 'the fundamental requirement is the willingness to exchange with others and to do so according to conditions different from those that apply in the conventional market: to exchange on a market freely invented by a group of people.'[3] Some of the strategies of the Venus project were derived from the world of conceptual art. It borrowed, for example, the logic of valuation as it operates in art, whereby anything, any activity can be presented as a potential value. This logic was projected onto a network of supply and demand consisting not just of things but of people as well, so that ideas as well as goods could be exchanged. In this way the 'market form', for the first few years, served as a vehicle for circulating ideas among members of the network, even when goods and services were not actually exchanged. The symbolic or visibility value of what were called 'eccentric goods' proved, in practice, not to be abstract: many young and unknown artists and technology experts gained great visibility in various media, regardless of the 'value' of what they offered on the network. Membership in these clubs and voluntary organizations, as well as the invention of alternative currencies, were the driving force behind symbolic connections operating at the boundary between organization and disorganization, producing and propagating trust out of nothing, alongside a discredited official market in ruins.

3. Ibid.

The currency issue forced the members of the Venus network to radically change their relationship with the economy. It was no longer something they had to suffer through but rather something that they could experiment with, starting from scratch, rewriting all the categories ('cash flow', 'circulation', 'money supply', etc.) for use in a market in progress, *conceived as a simulation exercise that would, sooner or later, evolve into another situation.*
In the beginning some people asked us how the currency was backed. Then came the corralito *(a 2001 law limiting the amount of money individuals could withdraw from their bank accounts), and people lost their savings and the provinces began issuing all kinds of new currencies . . . and no one asked about 'backing' ever again.*

Alan Paul's interview with Roberto Jacoby in the newspaper *Pagina 12*, Buenos Aires, 2002

Organizations are ways of establishing clusters in fluid situations; in uncertain situations these clusters operate under the name 'organizations', just as they functioned under the name 'institutions' in a largely calculable world. In times of change, no pre-existing form or internal structure is a guarantee for how these organizations will function. Whether they function is indicated by the speed with which they take shape in response to contingent stimuli, provocations, causes and disruptions.

I. Lewkowicz, *Pensar sin Estado*, Buenos Aires, 2004

These organizations are more horizontal than hierarchical. They are anti-systemic: not just anti-structure, but also anti-system. They are too exposed to interference and incursion by their environment to be systems; furthermore, they are not concerned with reproducing themselves as systems. They are more concerned with producing. Disorganizations are not coordinated in a normative way but rather operate according to values. When it comes to rules, they are perhaps more intractable than respectful. In terms of effect, these organizations are playing fields for actors who communicate, act strategically and negotiate.

R. Laddaga, *Estéticas de la emergencia*, Buenos Aires, 2005

The traditional concept of public space is that of a place to which all 'citizens' have access and in which ideas circulate freely. According to this definition, it is therefore more a place for mutual exposition and individual expression than a place for encounter, a place in which individuals endeavour to impose their opinion on others. This is the logical consequence of legal provisions that guarantee equal opportunity for all. Many describe this 'public' space as a game, but it seems to us that not all participants agree on the rules of this game. This is partly due to the continuing erosion of the concept of democracy. During the Argentine crisis, certain configurations made clear what is wrong with the existing concept of public space.

Public-sector employees who had been sacked in the process of privatization in 1996, for example, discovered that protesting – one of the basic rights in a democracy – in 'public' space had no effect whatsoever. They decided to interfere with the traffic system of the state economy by blockading a national motorway, bringing the logistic operations of the oil industry to a standstill for an indefinite period of time. This action attracted immense publicity. The *piquetero* organizations that were formed quickly understood that one of the keys to visibility in politics and in the media lies in logistic flows, not in conventional centres of production.

One interesting *piquetero* group was MTL. It started out by blockading motorways and streets, denying the police access to homes where squatters were to be evicted. From its beginnings in 1996, MTL has continually adapted its methodology and objectives. Initially it took part in the road blocks and worked with an array of political groups that set up group homes for people who had been evicted. Later it formed 'parallel cabinets', analogous to the state, to make laws and provide a form of welfare benefits.

In 2003, MTL took the form of a 'cooperative' whose aim was to build 300 dwellings for its members in the middle of Buenos Aires. At the same time, it set up a 'construction company' in order to build these dwellings; it trained and employed 240 inexperienced and jobless individuals for the purpose. The 'trial period,' if it can be called that, went so well that the group, even before completing its initial task, was able to compete successfully with mainstream construction companies. One of the most significant interventions in the construction was the opening of a street that linked two other streets that had been blocked by a factory for decades. It was a strategy designed to make it possible to build the dwellings within a homogeneous urban grid and link the new homes with the adjacent streets, institutions and businesses.

This example shows acting and thinking ranging from throwing up road blocks to active involvement in the construction of a group of dwellings. Instead

of interpreting public space as a 'place', all of these activities show that public space is dynamic, that it refers to movement rather than immobility, to connection rather than to disconnection. This concept goes against a crucial conception of the meaning of public space: the idea that a public space is defined by a general consensus regulated by the state. From the standpoint of political strategy you might describe these activities as 'a politics of connectivity' that replaces public 'space' with public 'connection'. There is no longer something continuous, homogeneous and common to everyone. The new social actors are increasingly involved in the production of realities in specific situations, with their own dynamics.

This text is based on research that uses highly scattered information on the Argentine crisis and the social experiments that began then and are ongoing today. The results of this research are therefore provisional; additional and up-to-date information will be made available in due course at http://postresilence.wordpress.com/. The research team for this article and timeline include Florencia Alvarez, Mauricio Corbalan and Pio Torroja. The authors are architects based in Buenos Aires and were all active members of the Venus project. This might explain the subjective preference for the Venus project in the general timeline as well.

Tristan Wibault

The Universal Embassy: A Place Open to the World

Gentium

There is only one virtue: impotence.
Robert Desnos

A Micropolitical Habitat

In January 2001 a group of 'illegals' – *sans-papiers* fighting for regularization[1] – occupied the abandoned building of the Somalian embassy in Brussels to meet their urgent need for accommodations. This place, abandoned because of the civil war in Somalia, property of a vanished state, was soon to become the Universal Embassy.[2] It is universal, because the individuals assembled here are conscious of the discrimination that is produced through ties to a nationality. Since then, the building has been inhabited solely by *sans-papiers*. The aim of the Universal Embassy is support and consequently autonomy. It helps the residents with their various administrative treks of a legal or social nature. It is a place that is open, where people that are illegal in their place of residence and can expect no support from the authorities of their countries of origin can exchange information, meet other communities, prepare battle plans. It has become the embassy of those who no longer have any embassy. The Universal Embassy is a unique place in Brussels, where *sans-papiers* can share their experiences, mutually support one another and develop a public voice, where all kinds of encounters are possible, where different communities mix, where a social life can become manifest and diversity can be expressed. Today there are approximately 30 people living in the Universal Embassy: men, women and children of Algerian, Moroccan, Rwandan, Ecuadorian, Albanian, Iranian and Ukrainian origins.

Agency in the Universal Embassy is developed in articulation between the misery of clandestinity and a political fiction. What is able to emerge in this is a new language: the language of a people to come. The function of acceptance and care is fundamental. This makes it possible to grasp the development of the situation of migrants: the processes leading to clandestinity, the obstacles in the way of regularization. This is where the center of agency is found. From this point, an expertise in survival is developed together with the residents, a legal and political expertise, an everyday sensibility. The entirety of the activities is directed to preparing the *sans-papiers* for the battle for the recognition of their rights, to giving them confidence in their means again. Something beyond the horizon of survival slowly crystallizes – a place that is more than emergency accommodations. The residents are the political subject, they organize their life.

1. The Verhofstadt I cabinet, the so-called 'rainbow coalition' of liberal, socialist and green parties, initiated a regularization campaign in 1999 for a limited period, which is meanwhile over. Roughly 30,000 *sans-papiers* were legalized in the course of this campaign. However, many applications still remained unprocessed after the end of the campaign, and many *sans-papiers* did not dare to submit applications to begin with (for fear of not meeting the criteria). (translator's note)

2. See also the Universal Embassy website, where further information and documentation can be found, along with the 'Declaration of the Universal Embassy': http://www.universal-embassy.be/.

Social work retreats into an individual relationship between supporter and supported. This relationship is hopelessly incapable of helping the victims of clandestinity, who are by definition without legal security. The measure of the humanity of the policies that the illegals encounter is variable. On the one hand they have access to certain rights and to certain institutions: such as receiving medical treatment, enrolling their children in school, or even rights to carry out precarious activities. Other than that, they can be prey to a raid in the subway and end up in a *centre fermé*.[3] It is ultimately in this constrained juridical space that the *sans-papiers* conducts his or her battle. The arbitrariness and the lack of an overall vision constantly contribute to the isolation of migrants, to the development of rumours, to the reproduction of acts of subjugation to procedures with no future. The political dimension disappears. Almost all that is left in the end is to demand the minimal status of a human being . . .

3. In Belgium, as in a number of other EU states, there are so-called 'closed centers' (*centres fermés*), separate camps in which *sans-papiers* can be detained for months, before finally being deported or – in the case of those persons who cannot be deported, for example, for legal or administrative reasons – released into clandestinity again. (translator's note)

Constrained Everyday Life

Clandestinity is an absurd journey, at the end of which there is the loss of identity. A resident from Somalia, that vanished country, wanders around in the city wearing a Zorro mask. In the *centre fermé* he would have held incoherent speeches . . . A migrant grandmother rings the doorbell of the neighbouring building, convinced that her daughter lives there: the Embassy of Saudi Arabia. She has spent seven years on a journey, during which reality dissolves . . . She is 77 years old. Clandestinity becomes a state of suspension in a parallel world, an evaporation of one's own substance.

The Universal Embassy is a concentrate of weakness. When someone comes here to find shelter, then it is because the precariousness of their situation has become unbearable. Fear is the clandestine's shadow. Fear of everything and everyone: of taking the bus, of working, of moving. One must take care not to be conspicuous, not to loiter in the shopping centres. Those who have nothing to buy, have no reason to loiter there . . . Every action holds its own measure of risk. It is the justice system that holds one together. The hope is minute, and everyone settles into waiting. Always, always waiting, everything concentrated on this waiting. Wearing out in wearing through the procedure, for months, for years. One seeks encouragement in thinking that it is still better than risking certain deportation. An obscene labyrinth.

No future, no possible life plan, 20, 30 years old. Clandestine migration extends the bitter experience of a lost youth. In order to flee from a leaden society or unemployment, migration becomes a life project in itself, the hope of a possibility. This dream retreats back to itself. The project becomes unreal. There

is no more desire that could be articulated. The hypothetical day of regularization becomes devoid of meaning, none can be invested in it. The only constant is that there is no solution. The loss of self is at work here. Becoming a driven, exploited animal, a criminal and a victim. No more reading, no more writing, earning three euros in an hour, even less as a woman.

Founding and building up the Universal Embassy means finding a concrete hope again. This is the articulation that is the point here: countering this constrained reality with something and moving beyond the nations and their desolate territories; being able to gain confidence in one's own means, to desire, to plan one's life.

The Universal Embassy is a facilitation. Initially it was a matter of accommodations that had to be renovated: cleaning from the top to the bottom, connecting water and electricity, furnishing a kitchen, repairing sanitary facilities, fixing the roof, etcetera. Nevertheless, this place – which is open in every respect and exposed to all possible influences – can only be a place of crisis. The living space alone is not viable, if the entirety of the problems of its inhabitants are not covered. Without having any authority, without being able to delegate anything. Every difficulty requires finding ways to overcome it. Very often outside the realm of medicine, outside the realm of law, through the realization of a habitat. A heterogeneous mosaic of those involved gradually emerges, which is grounded in respect and the exchange of knowledge. At the same time that the habitat is enriched, it breaks through the social isolation that is so effectively organized through repression. It becomes autonomous.

One can read *Ailleurs* (Elsewhere) by Henri Michaux together, the story of the Arpedres: 'The Arpedres are the most obstinate people there are, obsessed with righteousness, with rights and even more with duties. Respectable traditions, certainly. All of it without a horizon.' Expression liberates itself, steps out of the stigma, one can break loose, celebrate, and celebrating also means eating. It is possible to invest politics with meaning and derive a force of desiring from this, finding a place in the world again, where opinions are meaningful and actions are effective.

Autonomous Migrants

As migrants with no protocol, the *sans-papiers* are driven by the evidence of law to have rights. They are neither victims nor criminals. The autonomy of their movements sounds the call for a new relation of the legal subject to the productive subject. What can the historical bond between the citizen and the worker still mean, if foreigners are enslaved here? Supernumeraries of bio-power, their existence in the transnational world today invents new diasporas without the original break and constitutes multifarious networks of solidarity and exploita-

tion, in which origins, settlement and transit touch across several generations. The territory becomes the locale that is linked with the journey.

What we have here is the immediacy of a legal subject that is transnational, because it transcends the small agreements between nations; an interest other than in changing citizenship or in (inevitably always suspicious) dual citizenship, the desire for something else: an autonomy of personal and collective constitution and the paths of new solidarities that are released from territories and borders.

Europe remains blind with regard to this essential foundation of the world to come. By insisting on a conception of nationality that has nearly run its course, the various European countries indulge in the illusion of being able to control and halt the migrations, whose motivations lie solely in the initiatives of the migrants. What is implemented here is a new landscape of war. And it was actually thought that the negativity of the wall had been overcome.

By accepting that human beings undergo existential crises because they have no papers, the states remind us of how identity is to be understood. The existence of an identity between states is a loss of identity, which can go as far as the loss of one's name, but can also become a place of the universal that recomposes itself where the paths cross. The Universal Embassy seeks to impel this transition: from the extinguished identity to the universal that is to be constituted; transgressing affirmation by power of the negation of an existence without papers and sowing the seeds of constitutive desire; leaving the obligatory mediation of the state behind, in order to invoke a direct effect on a transnational right. Like every embassy, the Universal Embassy is a place of representation, but without a figured state. What is represented is emerging. Its inhabitants, the *sans-papiers*, new pariahs of the free world, contest a national citizenship that is a blood relation of the nation. By intervening in the contours of state representations, the embassy abolishes the limitation of the border locally. Its inhabitants are those who have already arrived in terms of a locale that is present in the world.

An earlier version of this text can be found on: www.republicart.net.

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book reviews

Wouter Davidts
Bouwen voor de kunst? Museumarchitectuur van Centre Pompidou tot Tate Modern

Gent 2006, ISBN 9076714282,
413 blz., € 19,50

Domeniek Ruyters

In recent years there has been a substantial boom in the construction of museums in the West. Every city has wanted to have its own museum showpiece that would draw, as a high-quality cultural attraction, more tourists to the city. The most well-known example is the Guggenheim Bilbao, the new building designed by Frank Gehry that brought world fame to the dilapidated Basque seaport. The Netherlands has the Groninger Museum designed by Alessandro Mendini, which provided an impulse to tourism in the isolated northern Dutch city. What these museum buildings, a product of city marketing, have in common is their architectural exuberance. The traditional tasks of museums, such as the collecting of art, seem to be of secondary relevance in these kitschy new buildings which declare themselves to be the main event.

Typically enough, Wouter Davidts has little to say in his book *Bouwen voor de kunst? Museum architectuur van Centre Pompidou tot Tate Modern* about these public success stories that give every public official responsible for culture wet dreams. Somewhat dutifully, Davidts describes the rise of the spectacular façade construction and points out how much these museums are the result of the increasingly fierce competition between cities for the cultural consumer. He disposes of these newly built museums with their ostentatious exteriors and utterly uninteresting and interchangeable interiors as 'schizophrenic'. In these buildings no thought has been devoted at all to how architecture can provide meaning for art, he states disappointedly.

Rather than dwell upon these architectural extravagances, Davidts deals at length with museum architecture that does take into account what happens inside the building and how this determines the building's entire essence. His interest in museum architecture is of a programmatic nature and thus focuses as much on content as on outward appearances. The basic assumption of the book is that the museum of art (the genre that Davidts restricts himself to here) is no longer a shrine where masterpieces are preserved. The privileged status which for centuries gave the museum a powerful identity and an appropriate temple-like appearance is increasingly being abandoned in favour of the model of the workshop, in the hope that the museum can better connect to developments in contemporary art. Davidts calls this new type of museum, which emerged in the 1970s, a 'dynamic machine'; the Centre Pompidou built in 1977 and Tate Modern from 2000 amount to the most important examples.

Under the inspiring impetus of jury member Willem Sandberg, the Centre Pompidou building committee devoted itself to the realization of the cultural supermarket, which conflicted with the museum as it was then perceived. The conspicuous building in the middle of Paris, in which all the utility ducts are affixed to the façade to create space, consists of stacked open floors without a single obstruction. The suggestion here is that everything is possible, but practice eventually proved to be more intractable. The 'liberated' anti-museum strove for optimal transparency and flexibility in an attempt to offer the artist an ideal workplace like his own studio, but all too soon came up against the dilemma that the desire to be a production site does not go together well with the museum's other function, that of a shelter. The national museum of modern art, spread

over two floors of the Centre Pompidou, was refurbished in the 1980s with fixed walls and routes for a permanent collection of non-contemporary art. Even the view of the city has largely been sacrificed, making the return to the white cube, deprived of time and topicality, complete. As a result, the Centre Pompidou became a bit of a temple.

Davidts' judgement is harsh. In fact, the ambition of the museum to be a workshop, equivalent to the artist's studio, has thrown it into an even deeper identity crisis than the one it was in after giving up its status as a temple. Of the workshop idea, which aspired to be closer to the topical sources of art, nothing remains but an illusion, so that the building merely offers the impression of a cultural factory without actually being one.

Years later, despite the failure of the Centre Pompidou, Tate Modern followed its example, albeit in an adapted form. The Tate did not build a factory but transformed one into a museum, copying the model of the exhibitions that many artists have been installing in factory spaces and lofts since the 1960s, in so-called 'alternative spaces'. Even though the brief for the new Tate building mentioned the ambition of being a workshop, the architects Herzog & De Meuron guaranteed an almost classical museological interior, with only the entrance hall betraying something of the building's origin as a factory. Davidts calls it an 'iconic' application of the workshop model, the decision having been made not to be 'a place of artistic production', but merely to provide 'the image of production'. In his view it represents the bankruptcy of the museological hunger for artistic authenticity. As he soberly observes, 'Museums want to stand at the centre of current artistic practice, but to their regret they have to acknowledge that since the 1960s this has been happening elsewhere – in places "outside" the museum.'

Despite these crippled ambitions, *Bouwen voor de kunst?* offers no swansong to the museum of art. The chapters on the Centre Pompidou and Tate Modern at the end of the book represent the apotheosis of a story lasting several chapters about the intriguing interaction of art and its (architectural) environment. This begins with the moment in the nineteenth century when art was uprooted, when it initially was able to survive thanks to the museum. The writings of Paul Valéry and Marcel Proust immediately demonstrated that the museum was not, nor could be, a definitive home for art. Art does not fully correspond to the place in which it is shown and so the museum also only offers a limited framework. There is always elsewhere to which art refers and for which it longs. The elsewhere of new meanings that art carries but that only there will express itself.

The idea that the museum is the definitive destination of all art (which underlies the ideal of the eternal depository) appears to be a persistent illusion. Artists in the 1960s and '70s referred to the contextual effect of art, how the meaning of art is dependent on its environment, its presentation and the institutional context in which it is placed when exhibited. Davidts discusses minimal art, Daniel Buren, Robert Smithson and Gordon Matta-Clark and their deconstruction of the relationship between art, space and museum. It is too often thought, he says, that museum architecture is merely there to serve art and should therefore adopt a more reticent position. But this is to ignore the far-reaching interaction in which art and architecture are involved. Even the most flexible space, such as the Centre Pompidou, cannot avoid the interaction, and therefore also the attendant limitations.

Davidts does not bring any major new facts to light, but the thorough way in which he charts the history behind the relatively recent typology of the museum as workshop is impressive. Davidts has read everything, interpreted every statement by artists and critics and has succeeded in organizing the abundance of material into a convincing theory. *Bouwen voor de kunst?* provides insight into one of the most interesting trends in contemporary museum culture, one which continues to be embraced by masses of museum directors. However sincere their intentions, the effectiveness of these is open to question after reading Davidts' book. It seems time for a complete change in how we think about museums.

Saskia Sassen
Territory-Authority-Rights. From Medieval to Global Assemblages

Princeton/Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2006, 502 pp., ISBN 13: 978-0-691-09538-7, $ 35.00

Geert Lovink

The American sociologist Saskia Sassen became known because of her insights into the shady world of financial computer networks that brought about a genuine revolution in the mid-1980s by linking stock exchanges to each other in real-time. Sassen's book *The Global City*, about New York, London and Tokyo, has in the meantime become a classic, with a new edition appearing a few years ago. In addition to studying metropolitan nodes, she devoted attention to the position of migrants and minorities, social movements, the role of the Internet and the emergence of international organizations like NGOs. What makes Sassen special is her engaged, multidisciplinary approach. Even though the material she is dealing with is dry and abstract, she always succeeds in engaging and sweeping along her readers. 'Complex' is a fashionable word that is generally used to conceal the fact that one doesn't really understand much, but this does not apply to Saskia Sassen. For her, complexity is a challenge and a compliment. When an analysis is complex then knowledge has been gained and we have acquired a deeper insight into large-scale social and political processes.

Sassen eschews the use of jargon and cannot easily be assigned to this or that school of theory. The name of Manuel Castells quickly comes to mind, but he is too much of a non-specialist and one is left guessing at the political import of his network society. What Sassen does share with Castells is her global perspective. Although both teach at American universities they have lived and worked in many places in the world. Another comparison could be made with Negri & Hardt's *Empire*, but this falls short because of the growing gulf between philosophy and sociology. Sassen's references to philosophy are limited to a footnote about Deleuze & Guattari's concept of assemblage. What hinders a potential dialogue between the two fields of study is the specific language that Sassen borrows from the institutional knowledge from which she draws. Whereas Hardt & Negri focus on the vitality of the 'multitude', Sassen concerns herself with the tedious triviality of the office, the meeting and the computer screen. Although Sassen traditionally devotes a lot of attention to neighbourhood organizations, NGOs and 'global civil society', she is not dreaming of a revolution. With great suppleness, Sassen reveals the proximity of institutional power, a level that many of us drop out of us because it is deemed impenetrable.

Territory-Authority-Rights or, as Saskia Sassen herself terms it, *TAR*, can be read as her magnum opus. Whether it is Sassen's best book is a moot point. The aim of this ambitious work is to show how the power of the nation-state is shifting to the global level, without describing this process in terms of the loss or end of the state. She does this by means of conceptualizations rather than case studies. What Saskia Sassen is concerned with is to develop a theoretical framework in which globalization is seen as a complex historical process that establishes itself at the local and national level. The government is not regarded as the enemy or an accomplice, but precisely as a vehicle. The emphasis she lays on the national level is a pragmatic rather than principled choice. Her work from the 1990s concentrated on the local level of the big city. Now it's the turn of the political level of the state. As an intellectual exercise, *TAR* makes for tough reading and thinking, for the very reason that Sassen runs counter to the simplistic metaphors of people like Thomas Friedman, who reverts to the medieval picture of a flat world. Sassen abandons the surface and demands of her readers that they should enter the depths with her. She does not claim that the state is superior nor does she disregard globalism, even though, after 9/11, there's a lot to be said for this. Sassen parries the idea that supranational organs are

drawing more power to themselves over the centuries and eroding governments with the notion that globalization actually manifests itself in and as the state. Internationalization simply makes the nation-state even stronger. The global beast does not suck the state empty but entrenches itself in it and builds on successful governmental structures. This notion has important consequences, particularly for the strategy of social movements; it is not wise to dismiss the nation-state or to see it purely as a defensive shield against wrongdoers from foreign countries.

It is sometimes said that Sassen disposes of globalization as an ideology and that the discourse of globalization can be deconstructed, but nothing is less true. The changes that have taken place since the 1960s, particularly in the area of financial services and world trade, are only too real. It goes without saying that nothing is virtual. The shifting of sovereignty towards closed organs like the WTO and the EU is all too tangible. What has changed since the 1980s is the extent of the depth of the 'worldwide scale' on which globalization works, and not the worldwide scale as such. It is thus not enough to dispose of globalization as though it had always existed or that it amounts to nothing. The struggle that is now flaring up has to do with concrete issues like the relationship between the private and the public, who can call himself a citizen of a particular state and where the boundaries of so-called global venture capital lie.

Without parading herself as a visionary or utopian, Sassen does wonder in *TAR* what citizenship could then mean if, at the national level, it has lost its legitimacy. What she envisages is a 'denationalized' state that anticipates and not only reacts. It is not the global state that is going to save us from the unbridled power of big businesses and aggressive regimes like those of Milosevic and Bush. The crucial issue is how 'citizens' will start to organize themselves on a global scale. Banks and multinationals have already done this, governments have their own organs, and now it is the turn of the people to organize themselves. Clearly, this should not be via the classical forms of political parties or trade unions. With the rise of (international) NGOs and the Internet, new political formations are revealing themselves, which Saskia Sassen neither extols nor denigrates. What this 'theorist of the second phase' does do is to think through the integration of all these new global facts. We have gone beyond the first phase of hype and critique; what now matters is the tough work still to be done. That is the lesson that many new social movements have learnt in their campaigns and which Saskia Sassen reflects upon in her own inimitable way.

Eric Kluitenberg (ed.), *Book of Imaginary Media. Excavating the Dream of the Ultimate Communication Medium*

Amsterdam/Rotterdam, NAi Publishers, 2006, 320 pp., ISBN 90-5662-539-fl/978-90-5662-539-9, € 33

Arjen Mulder

In 2004, De Balie in Amsterdam hosted a festival and symposium oddly entitled 'An archeology of imaginary media'. I recall fascinating lectures by Siegfried Zielinski, Bruce Sterling, Klaus Theweleit, Erkki Huhtamo, John Akomfrah and Timothy Druckrey, chaired by Balie staff member and media theorist, Eric Kluitenberg. Now we have the book of the symposium containing meticulously revised versions of the original lectures, augmented with a few additional texts and a DVD featuring other contributions to the festival.

The symposium title seemed to suggest that imaginary media existed primarily in the past – how else could it be subjected to archeological study? – but the book attempts to demonstrate the topicality of such media. And this is where the difficulties begin, because what are imaginary media? The book's subtitle – *Excavating the Dream of the Ultimate Communication Medium* – implies that imaginary media are always of a science-fictional nature, fantasies about what media could achieve if only technology were able to keep pace with our powers of imagination. But oddly enough, there is little evidence of such fantasies in the book.

What the absorbing contributions by Zielinski, Sterling and Huhtamo (Theweleit is for some reason absent) do discuss are all manner of marvellous devices which may or may not have existed in fact and which have now been so definitively overtaken by technological developments as to be barely conceivable. Examples are the incredibly complex *arcae musurgicae* invented by Athanasius Kircher in 1650, a composition box for composing every conceivable kind of music, Thaddeus Cahill's teleharmonium of 1907, which could be used to send electronic music to restaurants over the phone, and countless 'peep media' from previous centuries which allowed people to peer at educational, funny or obscene objects and pictures through a hole in the wall of a closed space.

These contributions exemplify Kluitenberg's remark in the introduction that the book is about understanding 'how imaginary qualities of media affect their actual course of development'. In the three mentioned essays, which make up half the book, the authors show how the potential of certain media are recognized before they can be realized or before a socially useful function for them has been discovered. The composition box looks ahead to the sampler, the telharmonium to muzak and peep media to the most universal peepshow of all, the TV and its successor, the webcam. Kluitenberg argues in his introduction that the aim of the essays is 'to retain a certain utopian potential of communications media, without stepping into the pitfalls of overly eager media imaginations, or the cynical political or economic agendas'. One example of such overly eager media imaginations combined with nefarious economic plans is the Internet bubble of the 1990s: when it burst in 2000, faith in the utopian potential of the Internet took quite a knock.

Halfway through the book, Kluitenberg himself takes a closer look at the often irrational motives behind media inventions like those of Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla. While the first dreamt of being able to converse with the dead, the second hoped to be able to transmit electric current without wires. Kluitenberg proceeds to link this constructive nonsense with Roland Barthes' concept of myth. 'Myths are signs whose original meaning has been erased and onto which new second order significations have been superimposed.' This Barthesian concept of myth proves to be fatal for Kluitenberg's imaginary media idea. The opposite of imaginary, according to Kluitenberg, is real; Barthes' mythical second order of meaning is imaginary while the underneath, first order is real; conclusion: the role of

imaginary media is to conceal the true 'strategic concerns behind the eternal myth of new technology'. Alas, alas. If that were so, this book would not be interesting, because it would only be about the flim-flam used to disguise ruthless economic and political games by means of the media, while the inventors and the majority of users are under the illusion that they have finally acquired the machine 'that can transcend the limitations of the merely human', as Kluitenberg writes.

If Kluitenberg had used Ernst Cassirer's epistemological concept of myth instead of Barthes' ideological one, his book would once again be interesting. According to Cassirer, we human beings have multiple, equivalent methods at our disposal for acquiring knowledge about the outside world and ourselves – the mythical is just one of them. The opposition between imaginary and real is false because something can only be real for us when it is also imaginary, when it stimulates our imagination and inspires us to new ideas and applications. Something that is merely real is banal, uninteresting, uninformative. Everything that lives for us is both real and mythical. Even the human condition, which according to Kluitenberg cannot be compensated by technology, is just as mythical as technology itself – both are cognitive and emotional constructs for making the world and our place in it manageable, in the sense of accessible and intelligible. If Kluitenberg had taken his own concept of imaginary media seriously, he would not have been so discombobulated by the dotcom crash and would not have asked: 'Why did so many people by-pass all sound judgement, and how was this unprecedented destruction of financial and human capital possible in the first place?' Our judgement only remains sound by going along with the desire that the world transcend our sound judgement.

The same critical attitude that undermines Kluitenberg, also weakens the (new) contribution of Richard Barbrook. During the 1964 World's Fair, according to Barbrook, IBM pretended that the computer was about creating artificial intelligence in order to distract visitors 'from discovering the original motivation for developing IBM's mainframes: killing millions of people'. Computers were indeed used, among other things, for calculating the trajectory of nuclear missiles. Yet it is also possible to assert the opposite – that the computer's military applications were a screen behind which IBM concealed the true potential of the computer in order to con the military into paying for its development. These 'true', utopian, objectives were a higher human intelligence and the exploration of the universe with a view to giving human life more room to manoeuvre. After all, those nuclear missiles were never going to be launched because they were not intended to knock out the enemy, merely to keep him from using his own weapons (and vice versa). The military uses of the computer were just as imaginary and mythical as the civilian ones.

Despite these criticisms, I regard the *Book of Imaginary Media* as a welcome addition to media theory and media archaeology. It stimulates thought and imagination in a way that I have not found anywhere else. That is because it focuses attention on an aspect of the media that makes them on the one hand so irresistibly interesting, and on the other hand so hopelessly inadequate. We want more from our media than they are able to offer and at the same time our imaginations repeatedly fail to truly grasp what media are capable of beyond mere communication.

Alex de Jong and Marc Schuilenburg
Mediapolis: Popular Culture and the City

Rotterdam, 010 Publishers, 2006, 240 pp., ISBN 9789064506338, € 24,50

Omar Muñoz Cremers

At the end of *Mediapolis* Alex de Jong and Marc Schuilenburg struggle in a fascinating way to describe contemporary urbanity. They touch upon the crux of their vision in a flash of inspiration: 'We should not regard architecture as the predominant means of shaping a city, of arranging it, or even of establishing it. Architecture is a link in the complex of media processes in which it has nestled.'

A major portion of *Mediapolis* analyses these media processes – the authors call it an exploration. They link these processes to *mediascapes*, in which popular culture is intertwined in and by the city. In this analysis, the authors produce what by Dutch standards is a wild mix of continental philosophy, cyberpunk, architectural concepts and '90s pop theory. The latter is immediately one of the book's greatest strengths. Theory in pop music in the Netherlands has traditionally been lacking, certainly in comparison to the UK or Germany, where it can be employed without any problem in tackling issues of identity, technology or mythology. The fact that De Jong and Schuilenburg fish generously out of a pool of ideas (Afrofuturism, sampladelia, scenius in connection with post-structuralism) makes their theoretical premise startling, except perhaps for a select company of Anglophiles already familiar with it. The second quality of *Mediapolis* lies in the way in which this view of pop music is confronted with ideas about the city.

The book opens with a study of the new generation of military computer games, in which simulations of the US army display a growing culture of control, a strict collection of rules for the use of (virtual) violence. A culture of control that is also steadily encroaching into reality, in which we have traded rights for fear and in which the dubious 'war on terror' is being slavishly accepted. De Jong and Schuilenburg, however, echo Michel Foucault in the idea that power always implies resistance. The battle for public space has not yet been definitively settled, such as in the *urban container*, in which work, shopping, housing and travel functions are combined in a compressed internal space that, like a fort, keeps out the big bad outside world. With J.G. Ballard in mind, a unique psychopathology will undoubtedly emerge here to cast a spanner into the works. Yet where, they wonder, 'are the cracks and empty spaces in our society where virtual resistence can nestle?' These are found in Arabic *intifada* games, which are not just an alternative for the simulations of the US army, but also an example of liberation practices, the formation of a common social identity and community.

The somewhat high-strung construction of the argument is characteristic of *Mediapolis*: rapid shifts between thinkers, between virtual and 'real' worlds, between pop and theory. The reader may suddenly find himself in a critique of the postcard architecture of Frank Gehry, for instance. Like the British architecture collective Archigram, the authors argue that the city in fact is never definitively settled. Using pop music like techno and urban, a collective term for hiphop and R&B, they present a different form of urbanity. They describe techno as a 'sonic' space that creates a mental picture of the city and, in the case of urban, as a series of products of activities through which a sensation of urbanity-without-the-city can be elicited. In short, there exists a physical city and an immaterial city, built out of urban fantasies and new sound communities. To sample it in the style of the authors: 'The coherence, unity, and the survival of the group -- major notions for every form of community -- are not based on physical proximity but rather on shared sounds and rhythms. The power and seduction of sound are strong enough to bring people together without there being mention of a transcending morality of overarching identity as the guiding principle. In this case, they are restless and asymmetrical groups that can be defined as spatial and process multiples.'

Through all these combinations, the complexity and the level of abstraction in *Mediapolis* is slowly magnified into the well-nigh utopian vision of Nodal Urbanity. Four media processes shape this: the virtual character of flows and networks (virtuality); the city as a fusion of word, image, movement and sound (multimediality); a global ramification of continually changing togetherness (connectivity) and an open environment linking several closed systems (interactivity). The physical structure of the city is imbedded in the intersections of these four media processes, which in turn impact architecture itself and inevitably form a new experience of the urban space. We live in an infinite process of change, devoid of history or future, the Mediapolis as Schizopolis. This latter provocative vortex in the book entails something powerful and elusive: the city as an overwhelming entity with its dark corners and overabundance of possibilities, suggesting that contemporary nationalist outbursts (the *urban container* on a national scale?) are a last rearguard action.

A few questions remain insufficiently addressed in *Mediapolis*. The absence of film is conspicuous, when the role of the city therein, from *Blade Runner* and *Akira* to *2046*, should provide sufficient food for thought, if only in the interaction with pop music (and techno in particular). And as in many studies of popular technological culture, the less well-off tend to be ignored. The Mediapolis that is explored and analysed here certainly has its share of poorly lit alleys, no-go areas and the urban spaces that represent their antithesis. But what life beyond the new virtual city limits looks like, and how people there view the dazzling lights and jittery rhythms, or how they hope to gain access to it, seems a good subject for a follow-up study.