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METROZONES
What Makes A Biopolitical Place?

A Discussion with Antonio Negri
Anne Querrien, Doina Petrescu, Constantin Petcou
Paris, 17th of September 2007

Toni Negri: I don’t know if any news has come your way about the urban struggles that have recently taken place. I am thinking about Denmark, with the struggle around this social centre that the authorities evacuated, and for which people did not stop fighting during the whole month of August. Or this incredible thing that happened in Rostock, on the edges of the G8 summit, with the organisation of a whole series of urban struggles. Today, the watchword of the European autonomous movements is to ‘take back the metropolis, take back the city, take back the centre’, and this has really become a widespread rallying cry: these movements which begin from the inside of cities, are from a political point of view, an extremely important thing. Then there is this huge mobilization in Italy, in Vicenza — this old catholic stronghold, but also the seat of a big NATO base. People rebelled against an expansion project of the base and the intensification of the military airport, because the Germans decided that the large Frankfurt NATO base was going to be emptied, and as a result Vicenza, immediately became the fallback solution. The Americans are transferring all the potential military intervention — which is particularly aimed at the Middle East — between Vicenza and Udine. And this is what people — not only those from the movement, but the city residents in general — refuse. The struggle has thus spread across the board: no-global movements, neighbourhood groups, Catholics, pacifists, ecologists... It is a new urban political activism, it is a different image of the city. For instance, people are saying: we do not want war established in our cities. Clearly, this has nothing to do with social centres in the form that they take throughout Italy and elsewhere, or Christiania. But it is exciting. Christiania is also impressive. I believe that there is something like five hundred people in prison in Copenhagen. The movement went on all summer long.

It is a model of resistance... At first there was no desire for provocation or direct confrontation, they were called ‘pink’. But, because they were fighting for their space of freedom they became ‘black!’ What is fundamental is the passage from the idea of confrontation, they were called ‘pink’. But, because they were fighting for their space of freedom they became ‘black!’ What is fundamental is the passage from the idea of confrontation, they were called ‘pink’. But, because they were fighting for their space of freedom they became ‘black!’ From this gap between two levels of action; maybe there is another diagonal between the political diagonal and the biopolitical diagram.

Constantin: Do you know of any more recent experiments than that of Christiania? Experiments that induce ‘soft’ change?

Toni: Your ‘soft’ is as though you were trying to say that the political diagonal could exist outside of the biopolitical diagram. Or to put in more brutal and caricatured terms, as though the affirmation of other life models could pass over the reality of power relations, as though one could be ‘outside’ power relations. I believe that one always has to consider the political diagonal on the inside of the biopolitical diagram. You can not believe that an action that touches life in all its most concrete aspects — in the biopolitical context, in the city context— can be ‘separated’: we are always caught in relations. In your analysis, and your choices, you must always consider the relation that exists between the political diagonal and the biopolitical diagram.

Constantin: What exactly is the biopolitical diagram?

Toni: The biopolitical diagram is the space in which the phenomena of the reproduction of organised life (social, political) in all their dimensions are controlled, captured and exploited- this has to do with the circulation of money, police presence, the normalisation of life forms, the exploitation of productivity, repression, the reining in of subjectivities... In the face of this, there is what I call a ‘political diagonal’, i.e. the relation that you have with these power relations, and which you can not but have. The problem is to know what side you are on: on the side of the power of life that resists, or on the side of its biopolitical exploitation. What is at stake in the city often takes shape in the struggle to re-appropriate a set of services essential to living (the question of housing, water, gas and electricity distribution, telephone system management, access to knowledge...).

Constantin: Here we’re talking about political struggles, of a rather global scale, that are interesting to us but less to those who live in the rush of day to day life, who fit in a life pattern imposed on them by others. When we refer to biopolitical space, we’re referring to a rather small-scale biopolitical space where the ‘average’ inhabitants can meet each other and reshape an everyday life that they control to the extent possible. All the examples that we discussed are very important, but there are very few people who are interested in them besides activists, in the strong sense of the word. We’re exploring an everyday ‘soft’ or ‘weak’ activism that everybody can put into practice, starting with the opposition to consumerism, to unwanted local urban projects which bring about undesired changes... etc., and to which the activists (in the strong sense of the word), who are more interested in global problems, aren’t committed. There is thus this gap between two levels of action; maybe there is another diagonal between the global biopolitical scales and the others.

Anne: In relation to exclusion, which is a huge phenomenon in big European urban centres, people are undertaking small struggles or small resistance actions in a problematic that is not that of the representation of the excluded vis-à-vis the global society. There is a series of actions that makes use of occupations, not necessarily squats, but through a negotiation to occupy spaces, to make spaces come alive in a way that does not follow a logic of exclusion but that of a development of local micro-powers. For instance, yesterday we found ourselves between two HLM (council
flats) blocks in the XXth arrondissement, a site where there had previously only been rubble, and now with the money from the Municipal Political Delegation, City Hall, the DRAC (Regional cultural affairs council), and the Prefecture, there is a sort of building where you can hold meetings, and there are garden plots, and there will also be a library. The people from the HLM across the street came over and said: ‘So, what’s going on here?’

Doina: It is through space that we can build a link with this political diagonal, where one can start opposing oneself, formulating counter-proposals, and from where a counter-power can emerge. These spaces —Felix Guattari talked about vacuoles—, are necessary in order to create breaches and to specify relationships so that those who are subjugated by these relationships are able to be in a direct position in order to formulate them, to confront them; otherwise they will always be represented by others, those who are the most politicised, those used to the struggle.

Toni: All of what you are telling me is a fascinating field of experimentation. I also think that the interstice represents an essential dimension, because it allows one to single in on a space that is precisely an ‘in-between’, which demands that one confront the problem of different languages and the link between them, or that of a power relation (the biopolitical exploitation of life) and force (the resistance that is expressed in the experimental practice of an interstitial space). This is almost an artistic problem. The question that I always ask myself —and this does not contradict what you are saying— is finally: ‘where is exodus at home?’ What is the space for those who want to go into exodus from power and its domination? For me, exodus sometimes also requires force. And this is, paradoxically, an exodus that does not seek an ‘outside’ of power, but which affirms the refusal of power, the freedom in the face of power, in the interior of its meshes, in the hollow of its meshes. Force... You are talking here of weak, soft multitudes... And for me, the use of these adjectives is quite problematic. In the case of this ‘weak’ and toned-down production, what is the production of specific subjectivity?... What is the specificity of this production? Where does this lead?

Constantin: In spaces like these, there are especially people such as unemployed, retired, intermittent artists; people who have a lot of time and who don’t have a socially valued subjectivity in the capitalistic social and professional environment. Through their implication and by taking up an activity (cinema, gardening, music, parties), they create positions, roles, subjectivities which they build by an aggregation between each other. And these subjectivities surpass identity because its via intersubjectivity that they get to that point, creating collective relationships, and, in the end, it is also produces a mental and social project. Precisely, this appears with time, through everyday practices, by long stretches, which is not specific to the highly visible and frontal struggles (as a matter of fact, Félix Guattari underlines the importance of the lasting ‘existential territories’ for the production of subjectivity and heterogenesis).

You cannot produce existential spaces in movements that are too agitated, so you must unite the conditions of heterogenesis, which is what we define as being alterology. When you let the other self-manifest and build his/her subjectivity, there is less violence, more listening, and more reciprocity. And you can even reach political dimensions without their being intended from the beginning, as it happened with ECObox: there were people who came to garden, then they started taking part in the debates, and in the end they were in front of the town hall with billboards, and among them were people who didn’t even have their papers. They never imagined they would come to that; and it was possible because there was a group, they were not alone, and because of the coherence in their project and in their action, the ‘good cause’ being obvious. And indeed it is difficult to be in this alterology, because for the most part capitalism emphasizes a logic of individualism.

Do you see contradictions between scales in biopolitics: abstract, general, symbolic and scales of everyday life, of the ordinary?

Toni: There are some conceptions of the biopolitical that consider it only as a field where biopower’s expression is played out in reality as the extreme form whereby modern political power’s rational or bureaucratic —and instrumental— force manages to organise itself. On the contrary, it is obvious that biopower is something that is played out on various levels: first on the level of micro-conflict, i.e. there where neither repression nor consensus are widespread, but where conflict is constantly reintroduced. Then, on the second level: when this conflictual situation is also productive —the moment of struggle is also that of a production of subjectivity. Class struggle as a struggle of classes is not very interesting. What is exciting is class struggle as a conflictual fabric, when subjectivities propose and construct themselves through situations of conflict. Exploitation is at the heart of this process; it is at the centre of the biopolitical. The intensity of exploitation is something that attains the soul —don’t be mistaken about this term: it passes through the body and touches on the way we think, our imagination, desires and passions. And it is on this, on this bodily intensity and this full singularity that one must determine resistance.

Doina: Yes, but how? That is the question.

Toni: Through action, through a ‘doing’, through a putting into operation. It is the only way. In the past one could imagine a world in which intellectual anticipation was a complement for action, and which made it possible to attain a certain level of universality. Today, material production is fed by intellectual production, the two are intertwined and form part of this biopolitical context. Without intellectual production there would not be this enormous power of capitalism. At the same time, one must be able to imagine a full resistance in which the bodily and intellectual elements would be inseparable, and which instead of being the field on which capitalist domination consolidates and reformulates itself, would become the very matter for a new organization of resistance. For me, the problem is to build another society in which there would be liberty, equality and solidarity... and joy. I am not pessimistic,
I do not believe that we must limit resistance to small units, micro-units. Moreover, I have an understanding of history that is full of leaps, discontinuities, ruptures, an accumulation of these ‘soft’ things of which you speak, but which, for me, absolutely do not exclude that this may lead to a threshold from where one must break harshly to create an event, something new.

**Doina:** But precisely in order to reach this threshold, there is a time of accumulation.

**Toni:** One must not theorise it. All betrayals have always emerged through a notion of time that was more important than the imagination of the rupture. Obviously, there is time — the time of the city, work time, travel time, time between life and death — it is a given, it is there. But why theorise it? I come from a generation that polemised about everything: reformism, betrayal, and also time…

**Constantin:** In your opinion, who is building biopolitical spaces today? Do you also know of small scale examples?

**Toni:** I only know those around me. For example, in Venetia, I know groups of people who occupied their apartments. They got together and built spaces — of solidarity, everyday life, shared struggle, communal production. This can take the form of cooperatives in which they work, or mutual help associations for the most vulnerable, migrants, the unemployed, the sick, the elderly… In this context, they are union type situations but which work against official unions, and which do this very well: they take over a very broad territory, very complex, but also very rich and contradictory, which mobilises many men and women, and experiments with other organizational and political intervention models, and more broadly, other forms of life… However, there are two ways of going about this. On the one hand, there is the ‘NGO’ way, and on the other, the ‘movement’ way. In Italy, it is the latter that is gaining more and more ground. For example, in Padua, the municipal government began implementing a whole set of measures against disorder and the negative image that would result from the city’s blaming of prostitution for the degradation. But the residents of many neighbourhoods organized a real ‘reaction to the reaction’ against the mayor and in solidarity with the ‘girls.’ They held demonstrations and went so far as to wall up the mayor’s door with bricks! Beyond the prostitute issue, they were protesting against a repression formalisation that was reining in their life in a wider sense. It is a Brazilian transvestite — magnificent on top of it — with exceptional oratory talent and an incredible political finesse, who managed the whole thing, who organized it and developed it, and who turned it into a common struggle for all liberties. So: how does one go from a repression of prostitution to the creation of a ‘small garden for all’…

**Constantin:** How do these small scale actions sometimes come together, organise themselves in order to reach a larger scale?

**Toni:** The levels are extremely different. There is a level of minimal participation: in the evening people will eat or drink together, they live in the same neighbourhood, and they will, for instance, occupy vacant apartments and organise themselves… They fight to maintain this occupation. Today, this is a growing phenomenon, not only because there is a need for this, but also because it is a new way of living and fighting, of creating, of getting organised together…

At first, this was a completely working class matter: it was about workers helping each other according to a very old tradition, but which has been completely reinvented because of the recent industrialisation of our society. These are basically associative practices, but which are alternatives to the workers’ movement, because the worker’s movement ended by reducing itself to a certain number of stalinist mechanisms. Alternative practices, for sure, but still completely working class. Afterwards, workers broadened their demands: not only housing, but payment for hours spent in commuting, for example. When the bosses did not want to give them this, they occupied the house next to the factory to be closer. In Italy, starting in the 1960s, this has basically been the process. Later on, with the crisis in the 1970s, one aspect was armed resistance with, for example, the phenomenon of armed struggle, and above all the defending of the privileges and social positions of some. Violence erupted on the scene, and I assure you that the ‘soft’ or ‘weak’ forms of solidarity that you have in mind were often the fundamental element upon which the armed struggle was built, because these where territories on which trust was essential. Paradoxically, the ‘soft’ often generated a real violence, because one finds oneself in an affective reaction that had more to do with a complicity born of closeness than a political decision… One must be careful with this…

Afterwards, there were terrible setbacks, which had consequences: political backfiring, drugs, disarray; and somewhat later the later the rebirth of ‘social centres’; places where one sought to bring together new political experiences, trying to both relaunch them and to invent something else… In reality, in Italy it is in the beginning of the 1990s that it all begins again, and it is also a new generation. A new generation that no longer has the same history, a generation that is rediscovering the political. Not institutional politics, but rather another relationship to the political in which what I previously called the ‘political diagonal’ becomes possible.

This is about the creation of the Green party, it is they who built it, in part instrumentally so as to have a structure that could benefit from the assistance offered by various municipal governments, and in part because concerns with the state of the planet were beginning to emerge as a ground for common struggles… In Italy there are a many examples of this… All these are characterised by the dynamics of a movement. To get to your ‘model’, for one can call it such, from here on in: an intensive model, almost interiorised, and in which the passage towards the formation of a ‘consciousness’, a common ‘becoming aware’ — even if these are horrible expressions, and I shouldn’t say it like this — is essential. This is a fantastic training, absolutely real and at the same time utopian, where each person is reinventing him or herself with the others…
I do not consider that the qualifier utopian is something negative as such, but I prefer that it not be used to escape the materiality of power relations, of reality — because it is therein that one must act, and not in some unreal dream dimension… So I know exactly what your answer is going to be: ‘we, we are in the process of transforming ourselves at every instant’… Yes, but, in hard reality, I also need something that does not depend on the representation of what is already there. A leap in which one can begin to speak not only of solidarity, but also of democracy, for instance. There is a moment where one must take the leap, this passage, to pose the real big problem that is behind all these micro-practices of which we are speaking and to think about how to respond to it…

Constantin: In fact, we talk about them, not directly, but we work very much around these issues. The fact that there is no hierarchy between the types of activities because, going back to the basic examples, there are people who came to garden and went on to debate politics and culture, but never the opposite! We are trying to create transversalities in different directions, in every direction if possible, and this is a lot about democracy, about equal conditions, and about access to knowledge.

Toni: What am I thinking about when I define a biopolitical context? For example, about the quantity of money that state or capitalist institutions, regardless of their specific context, bring into play. But also, in a mixed up way, about people’s lives. There is no ‘pure’ context that is totally political — or apolitical — or, on another level, a context of total misery, or total sterility, or a space that is totally liberate in relation to these same relations of power… For me, this is what is interesting about interstices: to bear witness to complexity, to turn it into a weapon instead of being subjected to it as an ‘impurity’ or a weakness…

Therefore, for me, this is a passage from a thematic of ‘weak’ solidarity and activism to a stronger activism or a more general reflection on democracy, which means taking all these things into account.

Constantin: Take what into account exactly?

Toni: All these flows that intersect, and which are real flows.

Doina: As soon as you isolate a space everything is portrayed there: all the social conflicts, the flows and all questions are asked, that of availability, of time, of sharing or of appropriation.

Toni: With the mass worker, thirty years ago, it was impossible to attempt, or even imagine such associative forms. This was immediately reduced to the family, to forms of social reproduction, to a certain type of aggregation, or at best, to a cooperative, generally as part of a party cell. I am fully convinced that the new forms of production, communication and circulation of languages and knowledge are of enormous help in making the affective elements — central to the new ‘associations’ — work. We are, today, in a biopolitical context of immaterial work (with an intellectual and affects component), a context in which what was considered an ‘individual’ is rethought as a ‘singularity’ in a flow of plural and different singularities that construct relations and shared distributions, compose what they are and create a new ‘common’. This is not the old superstructure, it is a material base in which each one is inserted while remaining open to the possibility of constructing a new being, new languages, new relations and forms of life, new value… And I am convinced that this is nowhere else as visible and forceful as in the urban dimension. Something has shifted and organised itself in the city — this was evident in what happened in the Parisian banlieues — and this is something fundamental.

One could mention a myriad of other examples. Rostock, this summer, was the first time in Germany that movements went beyond the traditional limit constituted by workers and unions. This is an important leap. But, before Rostock, there were other new experiences in Europe. The organisation of the precarious workers, of urban production and city spaces… From the standpoint of social configuration, this is all extremely new. There are many immigrants in certain sectors of immaterial work, there is an intellectual and qualified immigration, and in a broader sense a social intelligence that is everywhere, even with economic migrants who used to be less qualified… The relation to knowledge and cooperation has completely displaced the difference between material and immaterial and the question of qualification, including in illegality, in the most absolute precarity…

Doina: I think that the spaces we’re talking about allow just that… it transits through multiple types of occupancies. Some are illegal occupancies, others can be negotiated, but I would say that the fact of having a space is extremely important. What, myself, I understood of your seminar on the metropolis is that, in fact, the present day metropolis as a space of biopolitical production is somehow the equivalent of a factory and it has to be seen as a space of resistance and of struggle. It is in the metropolis that we have to create these spaces of encounter that can take different forms. Even the space of a café can be important… For it to be cumulative, there must be recurrence, repetition, continuity and long-term social temporalities. It is good to have Rostock, but it is also good that Rostock came after Edinburgh, that there is recurrence and continuity somewhere.

Constantin: The political dimension is not natural. It is more of a social dimension. Already, social issues are learned, through education; there are different types of cultures and sociability, and politics is even more, thus, it is taking part in one’s constitutional rights, democracy, equality. For me, subjectivity, the pre-individual, is a kind of pre-political condition. To be able to act politically, one must already be somewhere and thus we, through our action, try to greet the emergence of subjectivities and afterwards, if possible, to go further.
Toni: I even proposed to the Secretary General of the Italian steelworkers union to transform the workers’ councils into urban social centres… If the city is the place where valorisation is produced, it should be evident that we must transform the workers’ councils into places that are no longer reserved to the sole ‘operators’ of the sector, and that they should be open to all men and women who enable production… One should have citizens’ unions, in which a fundamental concern would be to take care of the most fragile and exploited: migrants, women, youth, the elderly… The Secretary General was not against this, he even seemed quite fascinated by the idea…

Doina: I would like to ask another question, that of invention and creativity, because like you say, you somewhat forced this political character to do something new, something unexpected: to look at the same space in another way, to transform it from a stock exchange to a social centre; in my opinion, this is a creative action.

Toni: In reality, I believe that a biopolitical place, like the city, is a space of mixture, of encounters and above all intellectual, political and ethical expression that is becoming increasingly important. One must imagine this exactly as one has always considered language, or the building of wealth: as accumulations. But accumulations that are more than a simple addition of parts. Creation is not an act of genius, and certainly not something individual, or something that belongs only to the avant-gardes. This is why, for example, copyright is always deeply arbitrary and almost criminal: it is an act of appropriation at the expense of a common multitudinous reality. And politics, this politics we are now speaking of, has to do with the organisation, structuring and institutionalisation of the biopolitical as a common and resistant subjectivation. The biopolitical is full of possible institutions. The institution is also a surplus of reality. The State is older and poorer than these movements. Ever, since I understood this, I began thinking that the institution should become a continuously open reality in which constituent power would not be excluded but integrated. An institution in permanent becoming. In general, constituent power is viewed as something that serves to found a system, and that is all. In the juridical system’s sources constituent power does not exist as such, it is pre-juridical! It must yield the place to constituted power as the sole creator of institutions. This is where one must break off. No, constituent power can be a juridical element, i.e. an institution that must constantly produce other institutions. One then needs a place for this. Nowadays, I believe that this place is the city.

Constantin: And how to keep this constituent power almost permanent, to not be institutionalised?
Brian Holmes

Do-It-Yourself Geopolitics
Map of the World Upside Down

What interests us in the image is not its function as a representation of reality, but its dynamic potential, its capacity to elicit and construct projections, interactions, narrative frames… devices for structuring reality. (1)

Franco Berardi ‘Bifo’,
L’immagine dispositivo

Vanguard art, in the twentieth century, began with the problem of its own overcoming—whether in the destructive, dadaist mode, which sought to tear apart the entire repertory of inherited forms and dissolve the very structures of the bourgeois ego, or in the expansive, constructivist mode, which sought to infuse architecture, design and the nascent mass media with a new dynamics of social purpose and a multiperspectival intelligence of political dialogue. Though both positions were committed to an irrepressible excess over the traditional genres of painting and sculpture, still they appeared as polar opposites, and they continued at ideological odds with each other throughout the first half of the century, despite zones of enigmatic or secret transaction (Schwitters, Van Doesburg…). But after the war, the extraordinarily wide network of revolutionary European artists which briefly coalesced, around 1960, into the Situationist International (SI), brought a decisive new twist to the dada/constructivist repertory of inherited forms and dissolve the very structures of the bourgeois ego, or in the expansive, constructivist mode, which sought to infuse architecture, design and the nascent mass media with a new dynamics of social purpose and a multiperspectival intelligence of political dialogue. Though both positions were committed to an irrepressible excess over the traditional genres of painting and sculpture, still they appeared as polar opposites, and they continued at ideological odds with each other throughout the first half of the century, despite zones of enigmatic or secret transaction (Schwitters, Van Doesburg…). But after the war, the extraordinarily wide network of revolutionary European artists which briefly coalesced, around 1960, into the Situationist International (SI), brought a decisive new twist to the dada/constructivist opposition. With their practice of ‘hijacking’ commercial images (détournement), with their cartographies of urban drifting (dérive), and above all with their aspiration to create the ‘higher games’ of ‘constructed situations’, the SI sought to subversively project a specifically artistic competence into the field of potentially active reception constituted by daily life in the consumer societies.

The firebrand career of the Situationist International was overshadowed by the political analysis of the Society of the Spectacle, a work which deliberately attempted to maximize the antagonism between the radical aesthetics of everyday life and the delusions purveyed every day by the professionalized, capital-intensive communications of the mass media. The SI as a group finally foundered over this antagonistic logic, which led to the successive exclusion of most of its members. But with the notion of subversive cartography and the practice of ‘constructed situations’, it was as though something new had been released into the world. Without having to ascribe exclusive origins or draw up faked genealogies, one can observe that since the period around 1968, the old drive to art’s self-overcoming has found a new field of possibility, in the conflicted and ambiguous relation between the educated sons and daughters of the former working classes and the proliferating products of the consciousness industry. The statistical fact that such a large number of people trained as artists are inducted into the service of this industry, combined with the ready availability of a ‘fluid language’ of détournement which allows them to exit from it pretty much whenever they choose, has been at the root of successive waves of social agitation which tend simultaneously to dissolve the very notion of a ‘vanguard’ and to reopen the ambition to construct a real democracy. And so the question on everyone’s lips becomes, how can I participate?

‘This is a chord. This is another. Now form a band.’ (2) The punk invitation to do-it-yourself music gives instant insight into the cultural revolution that swept through late-1970s Britain. The unpredictable mix of hilarity, transgression and class violence in public punk performance comes very close to the SI’s definition of a situation: ‘A moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambiance and a play of events’. Indeed, the relation between punk and situationism was widely perceived at the time. But there was also something else at stake, which was new by comparison to the disruptive tactics of the 1960s. Because the D.I.Y. invitation had another side, which said: ‘Now start a label’. The proliferation of garage bands would be matched with an outpouring of indie records, made and distributed autonomously. In this way, the punk movement marked a widespread attempt at appropriating the media, which in a society dominated by the consciousness industry is tantamount to appropriating the means of production. (3) There is a constructive drive at work here: a desire to respond, with technical means, to the recording companies’ techniques for the programming of desire. In other words, this was an initial, societal attempt to construct subversive situations on the scales permitted by modern communications.

Something fundamental changes when artistic concepts begin to be used against a backdrop of potentially massive appropriation, with a blurring of class distinctions. A territory of art appears within widening ‘underground’ circles, where the aesthetics of everyday practice is considered a political issue. It is precisely this transformation which must be understood, and theorized for the sake of a post-vanguard practice. It could be tracked through the radical fringe of the techno movement in the 1980s, with its white-label records produced under different names every time, its increasing use of sophisticated computer technology, its nomadic sound systems used for mounting concerts at any desired location. It could be explored in the offshoots of mail art, with the development of fanzines, the Art Strike and Plagiarist movements, the Luther Blissett project, the invention of radio- or telephone-assisted urban drifting. (4) It

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could be grasped in community-oriented video art, alternative TV projects, and the initial theories of ‘tactical media’. But rather than engaging in an archaeology of these developments, we can leap directly to their latest period of fruition, in the late 1990s, when a rekindled sense of antagonism once again pushed aesthetic producers along with many other groups into an overtly political confrontation with social norms and authorities.

This time, the full range of media available for appropriation could be hooked into a world-spanning distribution machine: the Internet. The specific practices of computer hacking and the general model they proposed of amateur intervention into complex systems gave confidence to a generation which had not personally experienced the defeats and dead-ends of the 1960s. Building on this constructive possibility, an ambition arose to map out the repressive and coercive order of the transnational corporations and institutions. Its corollary would be an attempt to disrupt that order through the construction of subversive carnivals on a global scale. Collective aesthetic practices, proliferating in social networks outside the institutional spheres of art, would be one the major vectors for this double desire to grasp and transform the new world map, to turn it upside down. A radically democratic desire that could be summed up in a seemingly impossible phrase: do-it-yourself geopolitics.

**J18, or the Financial Center Nearest You**

Does anyone know how it was really done? (5) The essence of cooperatively created events is to defy single narratives. But it can be said that on June 18, 1999, around noon, somewhere around ten thousand people flooded out of the tube lines at Liverpool station, in the City of London. Most found themselves holding a carnival mask, in the colors red, green, black, or gold -or maybe a few dozen masks, to pass along to others. Amidst the chaos of echoing voices and pounding drums, it might have been possible to read these texts on the back:

Those in authority fear the mask for their power partly resides in identifying, stamping and cataloguing: in knowing who you are. But a Carnival needs masks, thousands of masks... Masking up releases our commonality, enables us to act together... During the last years the power of money has presented a new mask over its criminal face. Disregarding borders, with no importance given to race or colors, the power of money humiliates dignities, insults honseties and assassinates hopes.

On the signal follow your color / Let the Carnival begin...(6)

The music was supposed to come from speakers carried in backpacks. But no one could hear it above the roar. Four groups divided anyway, not exactly according to color; one went off track and ended up at London Bridge, to hold a party of its own. The others took separate paths through the medieval labyrinth of Europe’s largest financial district, converging toward a point which had been announced only by word of mouth and kept secret from all but a few: the London International Financial Futures & Options Exchange, or LIFFE building, the largest derivatives market in Europe – the pulsing, computerized, hyper-competitive brain of the beast. The trick was to parade anarchically through the winding streets, swaying to the samba bands, inviting passing traders and bank employees to take off their ties or heels and join the party, while a few smaller groups rushed ahead, to dodge tremblingly into alleyways and await that precise moment when a number of cars would inexplicably stop and begin blocking a stretch of Lower Thames Street. The sound system, of course, was already there. As protesters shoed struggling motorists out of the area, larger groups began weaving in, hoisting puppets to the rhythm of the music and waving red, black, and green. Reclaim the Streets flags in the air. The Carnival had begun, inside the ‘Square Mile’ of London’s prestigious financial district – and the police, taken entirely by surprise, could do nothing about it.

**Banners went up:** ‘OUR RESISTANCE IS AS GLOBAL AS CAPITAL’, ‘THE EARTH IS A COMMON TREASURY FOR ALL’, ‘REVOLUTION IS THE ONLY OPTION’. Posters by the French graphic arts group Ne Pas Plier were glued directly on the walls of banks, denouncing ‘MONEY WORLD’, proclaiming ‘RESISTANCE-EXISTENCE’, or portraying the earth as a giant hamburger waiting to be consumed. The site had also been chosen for its underground ecology: a long-buried stream runs below Dowgate Hill Street and Cousin Lane, right in front of the LIFFE building. A wall of cement and breeze blocks was built before the entrance to the exchange, while a fire hydrant was opened out in the street, projecting a spout of water thirty feet into the air and symbolically releasing the buried river from the sedimentations of capital. In a historical center of bourgeois discipline, inhibitions became very hard to find. This was a new kind of political *party*: a riotous event, in the Dionysian sense of the word.

The quality of such urban uprisings is spontaneous, unpredictable, because everything depends on the cooperative expression of a multitude of groups and individuals. Still these events can be nourished, charged in advance with logical and imaginary resources. In the months preceding J18, an information booklet on the financial operations of the City was prepared, under the name ‘Squaring Up to the Square Mile’. It included a map showing all the different categories of banking and trading institutions. Posters, stickers, tracts and articles were distributed locally and internationally, including 50,000 metallic gold fliers with a quote from the Situationist Raoul Vaneigem saying ‘to work for delight and authentic festivity is barely distinguishable from preparing for general insurrection’. A spoof newspaper was distributed massively, for free, under the title *Evading Standards*; the cover showed a dazed trader amidst piles of shredded paper, with a headline reading ‘GLOBAL MARKET MELTDOWN’. But most importantly, a call had been sent round the world, urging people to intervene in their local financial centers on June 18th, the opening day of the G8 summit held that year in Cologne. A movie trailer had even been spliced together, with footage from previous worldwide protests and a cavernous, horror-flick voice at the end pronouncing ‘June 18th: Coming to a financial center near you’.
This event was imbued with the history of the British social movement Reclaim the Streets (RTS), along with other groups such as London Greenpeace (a local eco-anarchist organization). RTS emerged from the anti-roads movement of the early 1990s, struggling against the freeway programs of the Thatcherite government. Its members employed direct action techniques, tunneling under construction sites, attaching themselves to machinery, putting their bodies on the line. 1994 had seen a summer-long campaign against the M11 highway link, which involved squatting the condemned residential district of Claremont Road and literally inhabiting the streets. It was a turning point. After that, the anti-roads protesters would no longer wait for the state to take the initiative. Finding inspiration in a 1973 text by the French philosopher André Gorz, ‘The Social Ideology of the Motor-Car’, they decided to reclaim the streets in the middle of London, and strike a joyful blow at the heart of the automobile society.(7) The first RTS party was held in the spring of 1995 in Camden Town, where hundreds of revelers surged out of a tube station at the moment of a staged fight between two colliding motorists. A new form of popular protest was born, with occupation techniques and a performance culture that spread contagiously around Britain. From there, it was just another giant leap of the imagination to the concept of the global street party – first realized in 1998 in some thirty countries, within the wider context of the ‘global days of action’ against neoliberalism.

London RTS was part of the PGA, People’s Global Action, a grassroots counter-globalization network which first emerged in 1997. Behind it lay the poetic politics of the Zapatistas, and the charismatic figure of Subcommandante Marcos. But ahead of it lay the invention of a truly worldwide social movement, cutting across the global division of labor and piercing the opaque screens of the corporate media. For the day of global action on June 18, video-makers collaborated with an early autonomous media lab called Backspace, right across the Thames from the LIFFE building. Tapes were delivered to the space during the event, roughly edited for streaming on the web, then sent directly away through the post to avoid any possible seizure.(8) Perhaps more importantly, a group of hackers in Sydney, Australia, had written a special piece of software for live updating of the webpage devoted to their local J18 event. Six months later, this ‘Active Software’ would be used in the American city of Seattle, as the foundation of the Indymedia project – a multiperspectival instrument of political information and dialogue for the twenty-first century.(9)

As in Seattle, confrontations occurred with the police. While the crowd retreated down Thames Street towards Trafalgar Square, a plume of smoke rose above St. Paul’s cathedral, as if to signify that this carnival was serious. The next day the Financial Times bore the headline: ‘Anti-capitalists lay siege to the City of London’. The words marked a rupture in the triumphant language of the press in the 1990s, which had eliminated the very notion of anti-capitalism from its vocabulary. But the real media event unfolded on the Internet. The RTS website showed a map of the earth, with links reporting actions in forty-four different countries and regions. The concept of the global street party had been fulfilled, at previously unknown levels of political analysis and tactical sophistication. A new cartography of ethical-aesthetic practice had been invented, embodied and expressed all across the world.(10)

Circuits of Production and Distribution

J18 was clearly not an art work. It was an event, a collectively constructed situation. It opened up a territory of experience for its participants – a ‘temporary autonomous zone’, in the words of the immensely popular anarchist writer Hakim Bey. With respect to the virtual worlds of art and literature, but also of political theory, such events can be conceived as actualizations: what they offer is a space-time for the effectuation of latent possibilities. This is their message: ‘ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE’, the slogan of the World Social Forum. But what’s also a relief to see is how the recent political mobilizations help make another world possible for art, outside the constituted circuits of production and distribution.

One place to start is the Internet. Email lists and websites have opened up a new kind of transnational public sphere, where artistic activities can be discussed as part of a larger, freewheeling conversation on the evolution of society.(11) Such discussions provide a critical arena for the evaluation of artistic proposals, outside the gallery-magazine-museum system. Classic examples are the transnational listserv Nettime, the New-York based website called The Thing, the former Public Netbase in Vienna, Ljudmila in Ljubljana, etc. Their emergence, in the mid-1990s, gave intellectual focus and a heightened sense of agency to the meeting of artistic practice and political activism, under the name of ‘tactical media’.

The concept of tactical media was worked out at the Next 5 Minutes conferences, which took place in Amsterdam from 1993 to 2002, at three-year intervals.(12) David Garcia and Geert Lovink summed it up in 1997: ‘Tactical Media are what happens when the cheap “do it yourself” media, made possible by the revolution in consumer electronics and expanded forms of distribution (from public access cable to the Internet) are exploited by groups and individuals who feel aggrieved by or excluded from the wider culture.’(13) The key notion comes from Michel de Certeau, who described consumption as ‘a set of tactics by which the weak make use of the strong.’(14) At stake is the possibility of autonomous image and information production in an era dominated by huge, capital intensive structures and tightly disciplined networks. But de Certeau spoke of oral, premodern cultures, whose intimate, unrecorded practices could appear as an escape route from hyper-rationalized capitalism; whereas the tactics in question are those of knowledge workers in the postindustrial economy, much closer to what Toni Negri and his fellow-travelers would call the ‘multitudes’. With their DVCams, websites and streaming media techniques, the new activists practice an ‘aesthetic of poaching, tricking, reading, speaking, strolling, shopping, desiring… the hunter’s cunning, maneuvers, polymorphic situations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike’. This was very much the spirit of Next 5 Minutes 3, in the spring of 1999, just as the counter-globalization movement was about to break into full public view. Tactical media would help give public voice to the insurgent multitudes.
With the cycle of struggles that unfolded from 1999 to 2003, a new territory of experience gained consistency. Densely interwoven with political analyses, but also with aesthetic images and affects, this mobile territory shifted its ground from city to city, in a round-the-world tour that culminated with the massive protests of February 15, 2003, which reached planetary scale but did not stop the war. Capitalising on the feelings of sadness and depression that followed this immense cry for peace, politicians and sociologists quickly proclaimed the death of the movement, because their deepest desire is to control everything that lives. But the street is no longer the same as it was before, the struggles always come back from their periods of latency, and what we call ‘art’ is now freer, more protean, more resistant, in the wake of those tumultuous years. When you think back on it today, June 18th and all that followed looks like an irreverent but amazingly constructive way to collectively usher in the coming of the twenty-first century.

Anne Querrien

**The exodus lives on the street corner**

When you live in the city, how can you reach a free world? Where can you gaze at the stars from and where do you find the room to breathe? How do you resist the grey oppression, the merging into the identical, the squashing of difference, suffocation in a house or a flat? You go down to the street, go as far as the corner, and you wait. Others do much the same. As W.F. White has shown in relation to the Italians of Boston in 1943, the society of the street corner inspires fear, it belongs to the immigrant neighbourhood. Ordinary people do not have a need for a gathering point; on the street corner, they will turn or cross over, they have nothing unknown to wait for, they know where they are going. Immigrants go there to wait for an opportunity to present itself, to regroup, to guage this moment together, to pass on hints, or to leave the group to pursue a more personal adventure. The street corner is where you find ‘the gang’, literally, those who are prepared to go there, the band. The modernist architectural movement suppressed the street and its corners in the city. The foot of the building block held its place as a rallying point, limiting the gang to the stairwell. And so it becomes necessary to return indoors, all loitering outside, provokes the policing of identity. And since 2003 even halls are forbidden to the ‘aggressive presence’ of youth, under pain of a fine. Immigrant society has been reduced to the space of lodging.

**Communal spaces for women**

There is another presence on the streets: women. It is a necessity to go out and get supplies. But it should also be possible to stop and chat, to leave the children for a moment after school, and to do things together, to breathe. To have courtyards and gardens and spaces that are both open and closed, where there is trust, where the grass flowers aren’t yet municipalised, forbidden from being picked under pain of a fine. The city is truly there to be fined.

Urban space is fragmented, residentialised, codified; it no longer communicates, instead it barraicades itself in against fear. Space becomes smoothed-over. Outdoors it is possible only to circulate, but there is nothing to see, new buildings show their backs to the street, or surround themselves with walls or hedges. Housing, denied to a great number, is well-guarded by all. These functional cells have definite contours. In this way, comfort is delivered by exact measurement, precise references; space is divided into squares. It oozes boredom. The petit-bourgeoise interior continues as variation equipped with all the instruments that are needed for doing this alone. But what is the use of doing the technician («ouvrier spécialisé») of your own house? Can you still talk for no reason, simply for pleasure?
The local organisations who go from door to door in the neighbourhood demand subscriptions, a certain loyalty, but they always have an objective that is precise and limited, limits which you are always at risk of going beyond. Stopping rents and charges from rising, drawing attention to necessary works, these are good claims. Every 4 years you vote for housing representatives. Just as every 5 years you vote for a president, deputy, every six years for the mayor. For a couple of months of campaigning you can talk about everything that is bothering you, but never about the need for housing for all; activities are eventually organised in exchange for militant subscriptions, a certain loyalty, but they always have an objective that is precise and limited, limits which you are always at risk of going beyond. Stopping rents and charges from rising, drawing attention to necessary works, these are good claims.

Spaces of conspiracy
To go out into the serialised city is deceptive. Space is squared off, regulated, domesticated, untouchable. The footsteps of passers-by on the pavement walking in sync, are unaware of the people that the city holds. Terrains vagues, building sites, holes, demolition works catch the eye all the same. But for the most part people pass by more quickly still, hurrying to find their footing. Something happens over there, some youngsters and a couple of others. Another world is pressing in from behind these palissades. Is there a possibility for play in the city? The world of tagging and graffiti can this open up to others?

‘Urban actions’ are interesting in this context, but only when there are buildings to occupy. Some families are housed in order to remind the public conscience of the need for housing for all; activities are eventually organised in exchange for militant information, to improve information about political problems. Space functions in such a way that it is no longer a question of coming here to present yourself, unless you consider yourself completely legitimate, because already there are militant members present. Open-air, leftover spaces do not have this same central role, they are interesting to ‘street corner society’ and to a number professionals in search of a use of this opportunity of spaces where you take your place, enter into dialogue, persuade, feel pressure, experience the possibility of democracy. Not a ‘representative democracy’, as there is no election of a representative of any sort, nor participative, as it is not about participating in a decision to be taken by a superior, but a democracy in which each one encounters the other in their sameness and difference. The garden is made for this particular, new urban game: a material pleasure, circumscribed, tangible.

Activate space rather than submit it, configure a place while you are waiting, instead of responding to a command, mobilise an artist-inhabitant competence. Artists who live there, or who present themselves at the moment of a festival like the interesting experience of Apolonija and Meike in Edinburgh. A corner is subjected to the process of degradation or renovation of a neighbourhood, via the city’s planning process.

Do you want to participate? We will organise you but in our way, with our tools. A rallying point for goodwill around the desire to make collectively, a garden, meals, encounters. You enter a space and negotiate its use, for a while. Which can be spectacular, a festival. But for this production to last, it is ‘you don’t know’ and ‘almost nothing at all’, as Vladimir Jankelevitch would say. Something visible, tangible, a thing, around which to rally, to create a waiting point. A sigh, of ease, of joy. Breathing, conspiring if, as Radio Alice said, in Bologna in 1977: ‘to conspire is to breath together’.

Spaces for setting down dreams
To make art in a space, together, to begin by setting down intentions and desires, in a material form that can be shared: so strange that this can appear to exist at all in large, global cities, even if that demands sophisticated and cautious approaches, as a measure of the fragility of subject positions. Everywhere artists of a new genre are making use of this opportunity of spaces where you take your place, enter into dialogue, persuade, feel pressure, experience the possibility of democracy. Not a ‘representative democracy’, as there is no election of a representative of any sort, nor participative, as it is not about participating in a decision to be taken by a superior, but a democracy in which each one encounters the other in their sameness and difference. The garden is made for this particular, new urban game: a material pleasure, circumscribed, tangible.

There are several community gardens that have developed in Paris over the years, with the endorsement of the city, which organises access to its undeveloped “friches”. A “shared garden” (jardin partagé) is “an open space for the neighbourhood which favours encounters between cultures and generations”. It also enables the tying of relations from different lifestyles in the local district: schools, retirement homes, and hospitals. In this garden, respect for the environment and for the development of biodiversity are de mise. Such a garden is handed over to an association by a contract for the duration of a year, renewable up to 5 years (see www.paris.fr). All precautions are taken so that there is no regrouping of people expecting to do something else. Functionalism has once again fashioned its own leaden language.

The forms like the process of political interventions among artists in urban spaces are still new. The canonical form, the model to be repeated, is not their concern, on the contrary. According to artistic logic continual invention is de rigueur. Every opportunity, every place ought to bring out an original realisation. These realisations do not need to have beauty as their aim, but they do need to respond in the most economical way possible to the desire that brings them into existence. For these experiences, public money, mobilised effectively, is chiche. Form does not need to create distance from its users. Materials are recycled or cheap. Their construction is solid. The objects need to be able to pass through the hands of anyone, even the poorest. And to tempt their replication. One thinks of a form of Arte Povera which, different to the movement that carries this name, does not stop at the production of objects but concentrates on the continued process that makes them see the light of
day. In effect, the project develops through time, as a growing number of people start to frequent this end of the street. 200 people have joined Ecobox, on Rue Pajol, in the 18th arrondissement, to become keyholders to the gate that gives access to the «friche»), to gain access to their public space. The mobile kitchen, fitted with wheels, is an example of these situated objects which gather together energy and difference: recipes of migrant populations are exchanged and tasted here. Open debates about the world by artists and their friends surprise the inhabitants, who find themselves taking part in conversations that they would otherwise have thought confined to the world of Art. One space then another, and then others emerge on the initiative of others elsewhere. Living in the interstitial spaces of neighbourhood enclaves, promises renovation once again. Artistic interventions with inhabitants, opens up boutonnières of the everyday, urban spaces where you can stop without having to consume anything more than friendship. These boutonnières do not go without projects, interventions but the difference to those which flourished in the 1970s, is that it is no longer about conceiving a plan of social development for a neighbourhood, it is not about creating a totality that will replace an oppressive structure. It is not about making things better, except power, or about being the best professional of the moment. It is simply about making an eat, a ‘vacuole’ as described by Felix Guattari, a place where you can share ideas freely, casually like on the sofa of a salon.

**Research in multiple languages**

In these interventions the research, which one could say is ‘anthropoligical’, is carried out on the ground, in the thick of action. It is about evaluating the capacity of inhabitants to take control of their own lives, at the moment when a proposal is put to them not verbally but in acts carried out together. The basic hypothesis is that it is not possible to deduce from a simple observation of rubbish strewn streets, that this population is resistant to durable treatment, via municipal spearheading, as a sorting of waste. As Colette Petonnet has written, in relation to deprived populations, living in slums or in ‘sensitive neighbourhoods’ it is necessary to account for the ecological interest which exists amongst all human beings, and which constitutes what it is to be human: growing, cutting back, making culture out of nature. To make a garden is one of the first gestures of humanity, a gesture that is spoken in all languages, a gesture which recognises whether or not we are talking in the same language.

In La Chapelle it is mostly the women who have lain claim to the ground, not exclusively, for not much further away the society of the street corner is still very much present, with men. The women are as much in search as these men are for a part of the world, for a world of the ground and for a world of encounter. But they live in these interstices, slightly protected, collective spaces that are privately controlled where they are less exposed. Spaces which existed in the city of old, in the village, around the wash-house, or in the proximity of the courtyard. In Sweden, in Switzerland, the laundries in the flats are conducive to conversations between immigrants. Everywhere there is this dreaming of ‘beautiful laundrettes’.

In the communal space of the «friche», of the garden, of the interstice, languages present themselves like the women and children, languages of all the immigrants from the neighbourhood. These languages, with such different graphics, are evoked in that festival where phrases are exchanged with all the great difficulties of reciprocal writing, but with all the pleasure of shared effort. The ‘festival of languages’, organised by artist Marion Baruch at ECObox shows at close hand, tangibly, one could say, with these pieces of paper full of odd characters, that which is always recounted in the schools of these ‘sensitive neighbourhoods’ (quartiers sensibles) that you know, there are 25 languages, or 52, or 33, the exact number is not important, but something, in any case, that makes living together an impossibility. And all these languages were there, brought by women and children singing in their own languages, without understanding anything except that it was all very beautiful. Getting to know one another as different, seemingly creating a communal space. Making a garden, indifferent to languages, if not to traditions, a ‘plan of consistency’ (Felix Guattari) of the neighbourhood, where people come to project and share differences, to feel solidarity.

**Building a project full of multiple dimensions**

This plan of consistency has no spontaneity, it is the result of patient work: the choice of materials, a principle of organisation, the organisation of equality within difference. The layout of garden plots with the aid of recuperated palettes for walking on, make up this plan and its regularity, while the flowers and leaves express their differences and their similarities. The example of ECObox at La Chapelle supports this way of thinking; but examples glimpsed in other European cities illustrate this too.

Animating the space of the corner becomes a collective concern, to cultivate the garden but also to vary the form of animation: exhibitions, flea markets, debates, concerts, cinema, meals. These are not original things, they are simple: their presence here is, however, improbable. The realisation of a dream becomes possible, the neighbourhood is on high ground and yet is a place of nothing, flea markets in a friche, temporarily borrowed by a society in search of selling off its furniture. The feared day arrives. The space has been sold. It is necessary to move, to negotiate a relocation to a place further away. Interests differ: there are some who wish to continue with the gardening, there are others who prefer to pursue their own professional adventures, their own research. The experience cannot repeat itself identically: the experience bifurcates according to these two lines of life. It does not refract in another place changing direction, it does not retreat, it fragments and continues. One is here not in confrontation but out of defiance: those who have the power to laissez faire and have nothing to lose with this temporary occupation. In fact they have gained a lot. These leftover spaces in these enclaves of a neighbourhood where rumour declares these as no-go areas famed for its drug addicts for its violence, appear suddenly as havens of peace, like a garden of delight, which you would come from afar to see and which changes your image of the neighbourhood.
Condemned for demolition, the Halle Pajol at La Chapelle which hosted ECObox, will become, now that the City of Paris has taken it over, a central production point for solar energy, thanks to its renovated sheds! Who said we couldn’t be ecological here? We will be two times more ecological than you. You have proved that there is a need for a garden? So, we will make one ourselves, a formidable garden, with an astonishing design, a garden where no one can set foot, except for the official gardener. While you are waiting, would you like to continue your little experiences a little further away? Why not, at least that will leave us time to work out what to do.

Is it a waste of time to try and smooth out the path to the Mayor’s office? There is no doubt that you would lose time if you took part in any of this smoothing over. The imagination would perish for sure. Functional ready-made-thinking has already shown elsewhere, in similar places, that it has nothing to say. So in spite of irritation at having to leave this territory to non-inhabitants, the adventure continues. The apprenticeship is constant, an apprenticeship in the abundance of this population of the neighbourhood, a sort of improvised sociology, a kind of participant observation, which provides the proper facts for justifying the use of funds. An apprenticeship of the others in all their dimensions, and notably in the madnesses, the anxieties and other difficulties of living together, to which this space is not exempt, but to which it offers a space for direction and handling. A certain form of institutional psychoptherapy is practiced there, without mandate, like several social movements that do not favour exclusion.

Writing now and writing to come
Do you write in conditions like this? Perhaps it is here that there is a problem. The materiality of action is demanding, objects manipulated together abound, orality dominates. And all the same this (writing) is the condition of transmission. How can the street corner meet the dimensions of the world? Its frequency draws attention to small things. Putting this into perspective follows the professional bias, research of other efforts which are inscribed in a site as a way of transforming it, to put it at the disposal of inhabitants or the public. To bring to inhabitants’ attention that it is about seizing the world through language, through the body, through difference in perception. The public implies totalisation, an opening for sure researching sameness, or in any case the similar, accounts, generalisation, banalisation, comparison according to other criteria. The public is relieved of its duties by its anonymity, by the renunciation of linguistic diversity, by the absence of interest in the diversity of faces. The public, is the way out of the world of art, of sculpture, of material fashioning, and a way into the world of writing.

Writing must remain present, or rather become present, but only in part, as one art amongst others. As an art that produces books. Parked in the grounds of ECObox there is a mobile library, inspired in its form by the war machine described by Deleuze in his Thousand Plateaus. Like an old Asiatic float with four wheels, descended from a sedan chair. A reading cabinet mounted on wheels. This nomadic library is the reincarnated version of the library of Lozer where artists from the world over select its books, the friends of Marion Baruch. People would send in an e-mail recommending a book. These e-mails formed a collection: the bibliomail. The delights of the garden are savoured through reading. Nietzsche, as Deleuze recounts, spoke of evaluation, not as a way of accounting for an administration, nor for a public for whom the measurement is transmitted. The Nietzschean-Deleuzian evaluation emerges out of itself, pushing further and further afield, like a performing pole-vaulter. The evaluation is not concerned with a final object; it follows the line that it overthrows. Vaulting over the constraints of local and urban life, but also over those limited objects of urban struggles and over the applied vocabulary of professional life, which does not fulfil itself in one go. Each time it is necessary to harness energy, to be constantly perfecting a strategy, and to repeat, repeating until the moment comes, without ever pretending to believe that this time is the best and the last.

To love urban life as though it were but a localised dilation of the life of the whole world is not an easy thing: for this to happen, every action requires an unblocking of space -to co-create this with others.

Translation from French by Sophie Handler

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Interstitial Multiplicity (1)

Interstices represent what is left of resistance in big cities—resistance to normativity and regulation, to homogenization and appropriation. They embody, in a sense, what is still ‘available’ in the city. Their provisional and uncertain status allows for hint, a glimpse of other ways of creating a city that are open and collaborative, responsive and cooperative. The importance of the interstitial experiment is borne out in this very register, in methodological, formative, political, as well as heuristic terms.

Questioning from within

Interstices ease constraints. And yet this liberating tendency does not relieve us from reflecting on the resulting autonomy and how we want to shape it. Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers put it this way: ‘[W]hat an interstice can do cannot be known in advance; we can only say that it is a concept that invites plurality. […] The interstice in fact does not provide answers but instead gives rise to new questions.’(2) The interstitial experiment creates its own dimensions based on the terrain it explores and the ways in which it organizes its measure is its own process, namely ‘what it is about and to whom it matters.’(3) The experiment, in other words, turns back on its initiators and confronts them with their own involvement. To whom does the project matter? What is its intension? The critical relationship the experiment maintains with itself is not primarily determined by an external authority that would give it meaning (an ideal) or from which it would distinguish itself (a form of domination). It is rather as undecided, open, heterogeneous, and plural as the dynamics it itself sets in motion. Following Henri Lefebvre, we could say that an interstice opens up on several levels of reality and that each of these levels is defined in relation to the others. Each one becomes, in a way, the critical experiment of the other; the different levels of reality interpellate each other reciprocally. Here we find tacked away the origin of a host of questions. There we see traced the contours and trajectory of a form of autonomy to come. The interstice constitutes itself on a political level; it wants to break with the classical organization of the city. But it also confronts its own everyday limitations, integrating rhythms and rituals, habits and familiar practices. The interstitial experiment thus ‘encompasses a critique of art by the everyday and a critique of the everyday by art. It encompasses a critique of the political by everyday social practice and vice versa. It also includes, in an analogous sense, the critique of sleep and dreams by waking life (and vice versa), and the critique of the real by the imaginary and the possible (and vice versa). This means that it begins by establishing dialectical relationships, reciprocities, and implications.’(4) The interstitial experiment is thus above all about calling things into question, about a questioning that diffracts into multiple points of view at different levels of reality: a questioning that proceeds from within and by way of the inside, making the experiment fundamentally indeclicable. ‘[H]e who already knows cannot go beyond a known horizon. I wanted experience to lead where it would, not to lead it to some end point given in advance.’(5)

Moving ahead

There is no guarantee that a fissure, no matter how distinct, will stay open. The initial impetus fades; the rupture becomes difficult to maintain. Weariness, which weakens the best of intentions, and institutionalization, which insidiously assimilates and neutralizes the experimental process, can both cause some of the most creative and radical experiments to end by succumbing again to the given order. Once the interstice was alive; now its perspectives are narrowing, becoming restricted. There is no such thing as the unassimilable initiative or the irrecoverable project. Nothing in the way they are defined or constituted can protect them. Only their movement toward autonomy, their ingenuity, and their intelligence about particular situations allows them to resist; only their experimental and existential performativity provides them with the resources to endure. Their salvation is neither to be found in an alleged original purity (the worm was in the fruit from the beginning, the beautiful souls will tell us), nor in a great divide that would infallibly separate the grain from the chaff (sell-out was inevitable, the aspiring attorneys will conclude). No, nothing like this could ever guarantee the outcome of an experiment. Once opened, the interstice can only stay active and creative by moving forward and relentlessly pursuing its task of recomposition, and by preserving its indestructible singularity. But in the case of failure, the inventors of interstices, both those who find them and those who create them -for those who find treasure are indeed known as inventors- will find the hypercritical and the dogmatic turning against them. Instead of analyzing why an experiment was hijacked or undermined, these critics prefer to ‘attack those who took the initiative or put forward an idea.’(6) This error in analysis is tragic, because the fact that an experiment was aborted ‘does not mean that during a certain period the concept or project was not potentially active.’(7) Concentrating the criticism exclusively on the moment of failure (the closure of an interstice, an experiment’s return to the given order, the coopetion of a project) prevents an assessment of the experiment as a whole and does not allow for it to be grasped in its entire scope and creativity. Focusing on the result (recuperation) prevents taking stock of the process (autonomization). Once the answer is no longer in doubt, the question that was investigated in the experiment and activated in the interstice becomes relegated to the background. But is there still time to concern ourselves with the nature of a process once its end is no longer up for debate?

Shifting, reversing, diverting our perspectives

Michel de Certeau urges us at length in his works to shift our perspective, to reverse or divert it. For the author of The Practice of Everyday Life, a society is made up of certain prominent practices that are structuring, encompassing, noisy, and spectacular—and others that are ‘innumerable, […] that remain “minor”, always there but not organizing discourses and preserving the beginnings or remains of different (institutional, scientific) hypotheses for that society or for others.’(8) If our perspective is limited to what is most immediately before us -what reality presents to us as the most complete and legitimate- we will miss numerous realities that are quietly in the process of becoming. The society described by
Michel de Certeau is a society of multiple ontologies that cannot be reduced to its most visible and encompassing developments. For it is also composed of a multiplicity of fragmentary becomings, barely sketched, but waiting only to be activated: a multiplicity of becomings, minor or minoritarian, certainly, but with a constructive reach that should not be underestimated. An interstice is a privileged space where suppressed questions continue to make themselves heard, where certain ideas rejected by the dominant model affirm their topicality, and where many fettered and blocked minoritarian becomings demonstrate their vitality. Interstices are there to remind us that society never coincides perfectly with itself and that its development leaves numerous potentials unexplored -opportunities for authentic sociality or citizenship left lying fallow, when they could give rise to the most ambitious experiments. It is often art that fulfills the role of disclosure or revelation, that deploys or unfolds this potential accumulated by a society become multitude. Such a society-multitude is far from cultivating all the prospects it opens up. It neither lives up to its own strength nor manages to raise itself to the heights of its own creativity. By working in the interstices, by making breaks, by venturing off the beaten path, the multiplicity of becomings -denied, scorned, obscured, neglected- fights back and imposes its own perspectives. The interstitial experiment is a privileged opportunity to take up the potentialities and becomings that have been disqualified by the general economy, that have been kept on the fringes of society’s development or buried under a mound of commercial products.(9)

**The art of cunning**

Interstices are at work both within and in opposition to the city and its urban planning. They combine antagonistic (disjunctive) forces with constitutive (affirmative) ones. They are a counter-power emerging at the heart of the very reality being confronted -we could just as well speak of a counter-experiment or counter-existence given how much this form of antagonism is nourished by ‘positive’ forces. The interstitial experiment distances us from the classical conception of counter-power, which derives its energy (and reason for being) from the negative relationship it has with its institutional context. There is nothing of the kind in interstitial work: its force comes instead from the very processes it is able to initiate. Its gain in strength is realized and modulated according to the (lived, perceived) intensity of its creations and experiments. The interstitial experiment is a form of radicality and subversion that is essentially ‘positive’; it is directly pegged to the dynamic it sets in motion itself. Its power of opposition and contradiction does not come from the outside (in the sense of a reverse reflection of dominant reality) but is developed one step at a time from out of cooperations and alliances among participants, from the intensification of living assemblages (sharing, human contact), from the coexistence of multiple singularities…The interstice disrupts the flattering, aestheticized, efficient image the city has of itself, but not from an external point of view -such as a competing image of the city or an alternative program- but by being cunning with the city, by playing with its internal tensions and contradictions: it embraces what the city neglects and disinvests, its vacant lots, whatever it no longer manages to integrate, its transcultural mobilities. The interstitial experiment signals the end of the dream of purity in politics,(10) the idea that the alternative can be self-determined in a pure sense (such as an ideal or utopia). If another world is possible, its possibility comes from hybridization, displacement, detournement, reversal -but certainly not from the implementation of an ideal or a program for the realization of hope. As such, the interstice is the perfect metaphor for what could be a movement of antagonism and contradiction in the post-Fordist city: a movement that establishes itself at the pace of its own experiments, that increases in intensity thanks to the modes of life and desire it liberates, and that enters into opposition only to the degree that it is capable of inventing and creating.

**A politics of singularities**

Every interstitial experiment is based on very specific interests and desires. It is difficult to transpose what it does into other contexts or to have other actors integrate it into their own experiments. What it expresses is not immediately translatable. It would be delusional to think that, in an urban environment, interstices will end up by joining together, naturally unifying so as to plot another kind of urbanity in the texture of the city itself. The process is likely to be much more risky. Following Michael Hardt and Toni Negri, we have to admit that such experiments do not mesh with each other as do the links of a single chain of revolt.(11) The impetus, the trigger, and the motivations of the various experiments are certainly similar. In every case, there is a will to share other forms of sociality, a desire for the ‘common’ and for cooperation. But these are desires and wills that enact different perspectives and play out in very different contexts (political, aesthetic, intellectual, social, emotional, etc.). This multiplicity does not spontaneously form a discernible and legible unity; it is not, in a word, politically coherent. But, according to Hardt and Negri, what these experiments lose in extension and generalization, they gain in intensity. They are barely communicable; they are difficult to transpose. On the other hand, each one of them, by the sole virtue of its own dynamic, achieves a high degree of experimentation and creation and a great intensity in the elaboration and exploration of its assemblages. As the authors point out, precisely because these modes of struggle and resistance do not become extended or reinforce themselves horizontally, they are forced to leap vertically and achieve immediately a high level of creativity and constitutive intensity.(12) Because they define themselves by their authentically biopolitical character and are concerned with creating new forms of community and life, these experiments rapidly come into contact with what is essential and engage with global questions. This forces them to confront the kinds of ‘absolute’ problems that directly affect life and existence. What characterizes them is their own energy: their ability to initiate, to put things into gear, to get things started. Interstitial experiments are emblematic for a politics of singularities, that is, a politics that derives its strength from its mobility and intensities, from its ability to experiment and from the ‘quality’ of its assemblages, from its openness to questions and its ‘commonplace’ and immediate relationship to ‘absolute’ questions (these are ‘how’ questions: how to cooperate, how to create, how to educate and think? They are questions posed by the forms life takes).

**The ground floor of the city**

Vacant lots and abandoned buildings make up the ground floor of our cities today.(13) What does the ground floor represent? It is an intermediary space between the intimacy of a residence and the global nature of the city. It is a building’s threshold that, once crossed,
opens onto the multiplicity and the transversality of the streets. It is also a common area, neither private nor public, but a space that is shared by all the residents. The ground floor is a space-time where our paths can cross, where we can meet or ignore each other, where we can stop long enough to have a conversation, or through which we can pass as quickly as possible. It is a place shared by the most unlikely objects: bicycles, strollers, pieces of furniture left behind after a move, piles of junk mail, letters waiting for their addressees on top of mailboxes… We use the phrase ‘on the ground floor of the city’ to express a methodological principle. A sociology of ‘urban interstices’ can indeed have no better epistemological point of view than that afforded by the multiplicity of the ground floor with its interfaces and intervals, its intersection of many working and living communities. This ‘common space’ is composed of a large variety of collective space-times, each rejecting a withdrawal into identity or a supposedly protective intimacy as much as a verbose and intrusive ‘publicization’. Where are these ground floors of the city located? Where are our common places? They are to be found in the multiplicity of uncertain spaces - in terrains vagues and abandoned sites, everywhere transitions and transversality remain possible, everywhere we can still imagine there is something common, something shared, something that connects us.

Translated by Millay Hyatt

(1) This article came out of research on temporary urban interstices, intercultural spaces under construction, and neighborhood localities that was conducted under the auspices of the interdisciplinary research program Art – Architecture and Landscape of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Urban Planning. The research was carried out in collaboration with Constantin Petcou, Doina Petrescu, François Deck, and Kobe Matthys. The findings are largely based on conversations we had with the inhabitants of La Chapelle and with the numerous artists, activists, architects, and nonprofit groups who were associated at one point or another with our work. More information on this project, initiated by Doina Petrescu and Constantin Petcou and undertaken between 2005 and 2007, can be found at www.iscra.fr

(2) La sorcellerie capitaliste - Pratiques du désenvoûtement, éd. La Découverte, 2005, p.149.

(3) Idem, p.149.

(4) Henri Lefebvre, Critique de la vie quotidienne 2 - Fondements d’une sociologie de la quotidienneté, L’Arche éditeur, 1961, p.25.


(6) Henri Lefebvre, Critique de la vie quotidienne 3 - De la modernité au modernisme, Pour une métaphilosophie du quotidien, L’Arche éditeur, 1981, pp.105-106.

(7) Idem, p.106.


(11) Idem, p.54.

(12) Ibid., p.55.


Constantin Petcou / Doina Petrescu

Acting Space

Transversal notes, on-the-ground observations and concrete questions for us all

The crisis of the capitalist space

Capitalist means of production and of spatial-territorial management are more than ever undergoing a crisis. Global capitalist space is polarised between the North and the South, furrowed with unprecedented flows (of money, resources, people, etc.) for the most part in one direction. Certain cities are undergoing uncontrolled growth or decline, whether they are globalised under the control of mafias or obscure interest groups (religious, economic, political) in the South, or under pressure from economic mutations such as ‘shrinking cities’ in the North. From an ecological standpoint, the modes of territorial occupation and exploitation are evolving into a planetary stalemate: every day the surfaces of natural land diminish, making way for concrete and tarmac, implicitly contributing to the decrease of biodiversity. After years of study of the ‘planetary garden’, landscape architect Gilles Clement, overtly criticizes the modes of space anthropisation and underlines how unspoilt spaces play a role of protector. In this line of thought, he specifies how revealing it is that the IFLA (International Foundation of Landscape Architecture) assimilates industrial wastelands to ‘endangered landscape’. (1)

In the same way, sociologists and political scientists are trying to understand the major changes linked to this global territorial management: changes in the modes and temporality of labour, dislocation of traditional sociability forms, trivialization of violence in an urban setting and, by counter-reaction, privatisation of public spaces and the drive towards a multiplication of gated communities. For Arjun Appadurai, it is due to a gap between contemporary cultural realities and the shapes that must insure an acceptable level of social cohesion: the failure of the nation-state to bear and define the lives of its citizens is perceptible through the increase in parallel economies, private and semi-private police armies, secessionist nationalisms and non-governmental organizations that offer alternatives to the national control of subsistence and justice’. (2)

At a micro scale, capitalist space is drowned under promotional pressure that is continually carried out by all communication means and media (mail, telephone, television, internet) transforming the home into an absolute centre of a consumerist culture of the ephemeral. All objects are disposable; they are no longer recycled or repaired by oneself. Marketing studies perfectly include family temporalities in order to reach their different targets, at very specific hours, in their specific vulnerability (greedy children, solitary unemployed,
beloved animals, curious students, retired people in good health, couples in love, etc.).
On a larger scale, capitalist space is ever more limited and controlled: by a permanent
decrease in the field of possible actions within an urban space, by the superimposition
of numerous regulations and norms. In his attempt to imagine the possibility of an
ecological balance between environment, social issues and subjectivity, Felix Guattari
denounces the impoverishment and homogenisation produced by the capitalistic control
of the media and of public space: ‘productions of “primary” subjectivity (…) are
spreading on a truly industrial scale, especially by media and infrastructure’. (3) This
impoverishment of urban space can be seen via the gradual disappearance of space
dedicated to public uses and that of space likely to be appropriated for informal uses based
on responsibility and reciprocal trust.

Referring to Jane Jacobs’ analysis, and singling out the inherent contradictions that
capitalism creates on space, in his book devoted to the production of space, Henri
Lefebvre underlines the abstract character of capitalistic space ‘which acts as a tool or
domination’. (4) The methods and scenarios which try to be ‘creative’ and ‘attractive’
(by offering Theme Parcs, Urban Renewal programmes, ‘City Branding’ operations
etc.) are often a failure because space is above all considered in terms of financial yield
and its subjects are manipulated to accomplish just that. Capitalist economy continues
to create desubjectivated, consumerist and abstract urban spaces.

How is it possible to regain ownership, to resubjectivate the city? How does one act
being a professional of space issues; by what approach and by what political measure?
How is it possible to act being a regular inhabitant?

Desubjectivated space
For most of us, we react by simply following the same lifestyle since we lack instruments
to act; and by waiting for decisions to be made by high decision-making bodies, decisions
which are difficult to materialise because of the divergent interests put into play and the
macro-economic, geo-political unbalances which overlap evermore at all levels.
What some of us, the most politically active, are able to do, is to react by criticizing,
by organizing demonstrations, signing petitions and publishing alarming information
on internet. But these reactions stay at an abstract and discursive level even if the
discourse sometimes ‘takes to the streets’. Acting ‘in the streets’, in public space and on
a large scale is important and necessary, but sometimes leads to no outcome and to no
constructive proposals. And when there is an outcome, it is recovered by the dominating
power, often excluding those who, being concerned, articulated and asked for those
changes.
On the actual daily level, this barrier is due, among other things, to individuals being
reduced to roles which are void of any critical and active social position. Georgio
Agamben points at the contemporary state which acts like some kind of ‘desubjectivating
machine, like a machine which blurs all classical identities and at the same time,
and Foucault states it very well, like a machine which recodes, juridically speaking
especially, dissolved identities’. (5) Agamben goes on to underline that the ground
for this resubjectivation ‘is the same which exposes us to the subservient process of
biopower. Thus there is ambiguity and risk. Foucault demonstrates: the risk is that we
re-identify ourselves, that we invest this situation with a new identity, that we produce
a new subject, very well, but a subject subservient to the state, and from there we carry
on, despite ourselves, with this infinite process of subjectivation and subservience which
is precisely the definition of Biopower’. (6) The crisis related to space is doubled by the
crisis of individual and collective subjectivity.

If in our action we limit ourselves to a criticism of the institutions, that of the state and of
Capitalism, there is little hope for change. Acting to build « another world » will continue
to have limited impact as long as we don’t give ourselves the means, individually within
our reach, to reinvest urban space collectively, ecologically and politically; as long as
this space stays desubjectivated by our absence.

For the past few years and through a series of practical experiments begun with the
atelier d’architecture autogérée, we’ve been trying to develop, without ado, with the
means at our disposal and by associating anyone wishing to get involved, an approach,
which starting at the micro level, is able to provide another vision of the city. (7)

Acting in the interstices
When new people come to these spaces we’ve initiated, very often they ask if they
can do such and such activity. And, before answering, we ask ourselves if this activity
could be done again by others later on, insofar as not to hinder the project. We’ve come
to understand, together with the users of these spaces, that the freedom of each person
to act in a mutual space is conditioned by the necessity to not hinder someone else’s
freedom nor that of the whole project as a collective one. This way of acting allows for
the spatial coexistence of a ‘multitude in movement’ (8). It’s a way that gives the most
autonomy and at the same time spatial coexistence of subjects, which can manifest their
differences in a ‘permanent heterogenesis’ (9). By the human complexity put into play,
’spatial acting’ teaches us to manage the contradictions that space contains. Inevitably
these spaces will be contradictory by their content.

Acting spatial takes time. It is necessary to allow enough time for actively reinvesting
space; to spend time on location, to meet other people, to reinvent uses of free time, to
give oneself more and more time to share with others. Common desires can thus emerge
from these ‘shared moments’, collective dynamics and projects to come. Patiently, we
had to rebuild practices in spaces void of use, which are no longer suited to anyone.
Lefebvre clearly distinguishes the difference in nature between space produced by a
bottom-up process, set-up by concerned users and space decided by domineering
mechanisms: ‘the user’s space is experienced, not represented (conceived). Referring
to the abstract space of skills (architects, urban planners, designers), the space of tasks
that users accomplish on a daily level is a tangible space. Which means subjective. ‘It

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is a space of “subjects” and not of calculations…”(10). Therefore, we are looking to set the conditions of a non-predetermined experience, of a subjective experience which produces a collective narration of urban space through daily activity.

In the space smoothed over by capitalism, we must imagine other spaces to invest: grooves, cracks, breaches, loop-holes. We must multiply the modalities to act on the edge, the margins, the borders. In permaculture, we refer to the ‘border effect’; the ‘margin effect’ and Clement reminds us that there is more life where environments meet and overlap: ‘limits –interfaces, canopies, borders, thresholds, outskirts- in themselves comprise biological layers. Their wealth is often superior to the environments that they divide.’(11) In the spaces of ‘biological depth’, energy is concentrated and intensified by difference, by the encounter with other species. Likewise, in his quest for a definition of democratic space where we are not just tolerant, indifferent of difference, but precisely where ‘you do care about things or people who are different from you’, Richard Sennett refers to the multi-functional margin of the agora (Stoa, Heliaia, etc.) (12) He also talks about the difference between limited space and fringed space, between ‘boundary’ and ‘border’, defining the border as something simultaneously resistant and porous. This double and contradictory characteristic ‘resistant and porous’ mirrors the intensity and contradiction that characterize the paradoxical condition of the edge.

Like a metonymy of what happens inside, the limits and the enclosures of shared spaces that we’ve built to this day always find another function, parallel and contradictory: to let the view go through, to let the plants grow over, to expose, to play, etc. In this way, a limit between two spaces is transformed into a space of exchange; the separation is transformed into an interface for dialogue. We’ve replaced existing opaque enclosures with neighbourhood enclosures, library enclosures, pierced enclosures, gardened, soft…

**Alterotopical spaces**

By looking for urban spaces available for ‘acting’, we’ve invested cracks and ‘in-betweens’ that are also spaces that concentrate energy, are contradictory and porous. Clement describes them as spaces that allow a stronger ecological wealth than well-defined landscapes. In an urban setting, the ‘in-between’ is most often a neglected area between two buildings, a hollow between two wholes. Clement tells us that these cracks form a ‘tiers paysage’ – ‘third landscape’ which comprises ‘a territory for the multiple species which find nowhere else to be’.(13) It is the model of space to be shared with others: *alterotopy*. Foucault spoke of ‘heterotopias’ as spaces that have ‘the power to juxtapose in one real place many spaces and locations which are by themselves incompatible’, ‘spaces of the other’.(14) But the spaces we’re interested in, *alterotopias*, are other spaces as much as spaces of ‘the other’, and spaces built and shared ‘with others’ with those ‘you do care about, who are different from you’.

*Acting spaces* become spaces to question daily life, its potential, its barriers, its imposed temporalities. By blaming the stereotypical mechanisms of conformed spaces, these acting spaces can become spaces to dis-learn uses that are subservient to capitalism and to relearn singular uses, by producing a collective and spatial subjectivity proper to those involved. Through the daily weaving of desires, these micro-cultural practices in space introduce other temporalities, other dynamics (longer, random, collective and sometimes self-managed) thus comprising spaces, which undergo continual transformation, ‘auto-poietical’. (15)

By investing the ‘on our doorsteps’, we create interstices, differences, in a homogenised and abstract city. By overcoming the anonymous condition that we usually find as soon as we leave the house, we can contribute to resubjective space. From these spaces, proximity can acquire a familiar character; we meet familiar faces, we say hello to some passers-by, we exchange words and phrases with neighbours. Acting ‘at one’s doorstep’ allows one to find a local anchorage. At a certain moment, there is the risk to settle for this rediscovered social dimension and to limit oneself to a local and closed-in social circle. Indeed, the acting spaces that we develop stay open to transit, to intersecting with other subjectivities and dynamics from elsewhere; stemming from the local, we work to set up spatial trans-local networks and make them operational. (16)

This functional and pragmatic mixture of spaces that would ‘normally’ not intersect, this neighbourhood community that is active and permanent with ‘the other’, this weaving of scales and trans-local positions enable a spatial *alterotopic* production. It is a *realistic utopia*, such as Jacques Rancière describes it in his analysis of the political project: ‘not the dazzling utopia of the distant island, of the nowhere land, but the imperceptible utopia which consists in having two separate spaces coincide’. (17) Through this practice of trans-local *alterotopias*, we can reintroduce ‘the political dimension’ in everyday space.

**‘agencement jardinier’/ gardening assemblage**

For years, the children of families of African origin who regularly frequent ECObox named the garden ‘gardening’. At first we thought it was some kind of infantile slang or a linguistic error. Listening to them speak about the project as a place where they can play, ride their bikes, garden, draw, play music…where they can do anything, we came to understand their term. They had grasped the active character of space, the permanent transformation of the project according to those who invest in it. It was their way of defining acting in an auto-poietical space. The ‘acting’ is always an assemblage. What is important is the quality of this organisation, its ‘how’. Gardening offers a model for a certain type of organisation, which takes into account the singularities, implies patience, availability and the unexpected.

*Auto-poietical ‘acting’ enables the setting up of a daily ecology via ‘agencement jardinier’ (gardening assemblage): organisational dynamics by neighbourhood communities, conducting to exchanges, mobile, tolerant and cyclic. These are schemes that come close to ecological dynamics whilst being adapted to an urban environment, to small scales, to daily uses and practices. This mode of action by “agencement jardinier” can,
in time, produce a constituent space for modes of collective processes and for a local political acting.

‘Gardened space’ contrasts to ‘modern space’ produced by and experienced through a pragmatic cut-out, which separates all heterogeneous elements: functions, users, scales, etc. Because of these cut-outs, which bring about homogeneous, monovalent spaces, without contradiction, when superimpositions of heterogeneous environments and functions do occur, they are accidental and lead to conflict.

The gardening assemblage teaches us, via the different environments, to go from one space to another, to change locations and to come back. Little by little, we were able to link the heterogeneous spaces that we were building, together with their users, by bringing about unusual encounters, bits of dialogue, doing and making together, letting contradictions arise gently, learning about politics via heterogeneous temporalities, dynamics and content. More than verbal and deliberative forms, gardening assemblage encourages physical, visual, non-verbal practices; an incorporated democracy, living together as a common body.(18)

Nevertheless, investing in spatial acting must enable one to stay free in his/her action, free to change, to stop, to pass on. To be free of his/her acting can also mean to hand over (a project, an action, a movement…) but also the possibility to interrupt, to suspend, to introduce a (self)critical interval in his/her subjective journey.

Some of our projects introduce continuous temporary assemblages, based on the mobility of the architectural devices (palette garden, mobile modules, constructions which can be disassembled), that can move and be reinstalled many times, depending on the spatial opportunities. They demonstrate that we can forge durability with the temporary, from repetition and ritornellos that allow for a certain continuity (therefore a reinforcement) and at the same time for a reinstatement. Each time, it is just as much the space that re institutes itself as it is the subjects that resubjectivise in gardens, debates, exchanges, parties, political projects formulated collectively.

Synaptic subjectivity

Rancière noted that the group enables the appearance of a subject that thinks itself in relationship to others, ‘the formation of a one that is not a oneself but a relationship of oneself with someone else’. (19) The relationship with the other, the multiple possible relationships within the group, enable the appearance of a multiple and differential subjectivity.

The investment in a group project always goes through a strong initial motivation; group spaces and projects that we’ve experienced ‘from within and by way of the inside’, (20) allow transversal and hybrid activities (a fluidness of spaces and a mobility in the organisation, that by parallel uses makes it possible to cook and to participate just after a debate or to do handy work and listen, in the same space, to a concert, etc.). To frequent a diversity of activities and skills allows, at a certain moment, for a shift towards other implications, something unexpected, brought about by collective dynamics; people who at first come to garden can, little by little, get involved in political dynamics.

These heterogeneous and porous subjectivities, specific to interstitial environments allow each person to have multiple transits and successive and temporary adherences within different cultural, professional and social contexts.(21) Thus, as Rancière states, ‘the possibility, which is always open, of a new emergence from this ecliptic subject’, which by ‘the renewal of actors and of forms of their actions’ constitutes the guarantee of democratic permanence.(22) The social assimilation of this intermittent condition must generate subjectivity that is continually organising itself through multiple transversalities; constituting a ‘synaptic subject’, one that can function like a synapse: a body that receives and transmits flow.(23)

Synaptic subjectivities adapt to and manage interstices that comprise situations conducive to practicing the permanent negotiation of the ‘democratic undetermined’. (24) The undetermined character of these interstices is structural, by including each person’s specific differences and availabilities and by allowing anyone to actually get involved in democratic territoriality projects. These places can become the catalysers of ‘local democracy’ rebuilt and updated; then they can initiate connexions with other local projects, introducing networks that carry a ‘trans-local democracy’ and the birth of a large scale collective subjectivity, while staying locally anchored; ‘a rhizomatic collective subjectivity’. The construction of this rhizomatic subjectivity demands spatial micro-devices that can be inserted in sterilized metropolitan contexts thus initiating the resubjectivation processes. At the same time, these devices can contribute to rewriting a different urban and political discourse.

Guattari pertinently noted the role of architecture among other instruments of Integrated World Capitalism.(25) Our tangible experiments showed us that any initiative to adopt these devices by their users is essential for any political or societal project. ‘Architecture is not only the walls, but especially the people that act within and between these walls’, said a local participant in the ECObox project as he commented on City Hall’s initiative to renovate the Halle Pajol in order to put forward a ‘beacon’ project at the same time as the administrative services wished to evict, without discussion, the collective practices that had developed there.(26)

Biopolitical creativity

If the metropolis has lately become, simply because it is ‘inhabited’, the privileged place for biopolitical production (27) it is ‘on one’s doorstep’ that should be the new ‘factory’s cafeteria’, the interstice within the space of production from whence a political reconstruction can begin. But once started, this reconstruction is not void of conditions. Just like any ecological space, these places are reversible; by loss of interest,
insufficient investment, they can quickly disappear, be adopted in unfair or discretionary ways, become counter examples, and carry false discourses. In order to preserve them, we must invent an ecological, molecular, collective and daily political policy.

The metropolis is also, according to Negri, ‘biopolitical creativity’ ‘s ground, acting at all levels: social, cultural, and political. It is not necessarily visible because, being modest in means and appearance, biopolitical creation swarms at the border of the capitalist city in industrial wastelands, squats, ‘Centri Sociali’, encounters on the street corner and street parties, temporary occupations, ‘TAZ’, ‘participative platforms’ and syndications. New practices are being invented in the cracks of existing practices and skills, organisational forms, lifestyles and ways of doing…(28) Biopolitical creativity is at everyone’s reach. As Appadurai said: ‘Even the poorest of the poor should have the privilege and the ability to take part in the works of the imagination’. The question, he underlines, is if ‘we are able to create political policy that acknowledges that’(29).

Today, occupying an empty and unused space to live in under certain conditions, is acknowledged as a legal priority over other criteria of spatial lawfulness; it is the winter truce. We also feel that it is a priority for the metropolitan inhabitant to have access to abandoned spaces for the length of their availability and open them for collective uses that reinvest territory, which is ever more desubjectivated. With this conviction, over the years, we’ve opened a series of spaces that have been used by a large number of people: inhabitants, artists, unemployed, students, architects, retired men and women, researchers, activists, friends and neighbours. After two years of operation, 80 families from the La Chapelle quarter had the keys to ECObox; a few hundred people could therefore have access to a 2000m2 plot at any time of the day and of the week, arranged in part as a garden and in part as a workshop. These projects show the necessity of a legal acknowledgment, to open private and public spaces for collective uses, and of a political recognition for the social priorities in the management of metropolitan space, which is ever more subject to market laws.

*Acting space* requires opening, working out, using spaces with ‘the other’ as refuges for social and political (biodiversity, as well as the ecological care to keep fallow spaces and practices, to spot and preserve territories for the dreams of tomorrow, for *us-others*.

Translated from French by Nicole Klein

(7) With l’atelier d’architecture autogérée (aaa) we develop an alternative practice of microurbanism which initiates self-managed spaces run by their users. *aaa* is a collective platform which conducts actions and research concerning urban mutations and cultural, social and political emerging practices in the contemporary city. The interdisciplinary network was funded in Paris by architects, artists, students, researchers, unemployed persons, activists and residents. See also our article on the project ECObox, run as both architects and inhabitants of La Chapelle area, in the North of Paris, ‘Au rez-de-chaussée de la ville’, in *Multitude* n° 20, (Paris: 2005).
(8) Speaking about the project of the multitude, Hardt and Negri notice that such a project is only possible by the creation of ‘relations and social forms based on co-operative work.’ Michael Hardt et Antonio Negri, *Multitude – Guerre et démocratie à l’âge de l’Empire*, La Découverte, Paris, 2004, p. 121.
(9) ‘In his analysis of ‘existential territories’*, Guattari states that the praxis of the context can be constructed only through a discourse which include ‘heterogeneous elements that take on a mutual consistency and persistence as they cross the thresholds that constitute one world at the expense of another’, in F. Guattari, o.c. p. 54.
(13) G. Clément, o.c. p.19.
(15) ‘The notion of autopoiesis has been developed by H. Maturana and F. Varela in the 1970s. It names the qualities of a system which generates and continually specifies the production of its components. See also Francisco Varela (1979), *Autonomie et connaissance*, (Paris: Seuil, 1989).
(16) ‘Translocal’ is a central notion for Appadurai: ‘in the contemporary world, the production of neighbourhood tends to be realised within the conditions of the system of State-nations which is exerting normative control on local and translocal activities’ cf. A. Appadurai, o.c. p.259.
(18) R. Sennett, parallels the idea of ‘deliberative democracy’ and that of ‘associative democracy’, by comparing the functioning of two kind of public space in the ancient Greece : the Pnyx and the Agora. o.c. pp 40-45.
(19) Jacques Rancière, o.c. p.87.
(20) About the idea of interstitial reconstruction of the city ‘from within and by way of the inside’ see Pascal Nicolas-Le Strat’s contribution to the research project initiated together with aaa on Temporary Urban Interstices. See his article published in this book and also: www.inter-stices.org and www.iscra.fr
(21) The interstitial practices need, by their nature, to continually negotiate with possibly contradictory physical and subjective data. These constitute, according to Rancière, the fundamentals of any political exercise, as « the true nature of the political is supported by disensual modes of subjectivation ». J. Rancière, o.c. p.184.
The Ambivalence of Participation and Situational Urbanism

In the ‘ Dwelling’ issue of archplus (no. 176), Günther Uhlig discussed ‘Baugruppen’ (self-build groups)(1), a universally emerging new form of procurement of private housing. According to him, this form of ‘urban social development could be the watershed at the peak of the housing crisis’. The multitude of initiatives such as the ‘Baugruppenagentur’(2), in Hamburg, the ‘Wohnprojektatlas Bayern’(3), the ‘Tübinger Südstadt’(4), in Tübingen, the recently launched internet platform ‘wohnprojekte-berlin.info’ (5), the Leipzig programme for self-managed building (6), which aims to promote property ownership in inner cities, and the national association ‘Forum gemeinschaftliches Wohnen’ e.V.(7) supports the thesis of a growing urban development based on individual initiative. Following the decline of the welfare state housing provision, there seemed to be no alternative to individual responsibility and capital–even and in particular from the perspective of the state.

Baugruppen and the “Creative Class”

In a polemic article from the 8th of October 2006 the conservative German daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung gleefully characterised the residential quarter Vauban in the southern German city of Freiburg as an elitist but alternative petty-bourgeoise idyll: a Gated Community by Culture and Income with the nationwide highest concentration of salt crystal lamps, bicycle child trailers and breathing therapy groups - however there are neither foreigners nor unemployed(8). The highly praised settlement, which for the most part was realised by private developers and Baugruppen and so demonstrates a very precise form of self-organisation of a specific clientele, could also be interpreted as an exemplary case of self-managed urban development.

The ‘Creative City’(9), a project primarily triggered by Richard Florida and Charles Laundry, is rooted even more firmly in current urban reality and still fashionable within contemporary urban management. In summary a (neo)liberal urbanism is introduced to raise the attractiveness for the stakeholders of the creative industries, which are considered economically up-and-coming, by addressing their needs. Here the urban politics seems to relate positively to specific “bottom-up” dynamics in order to integrate them into its administrative systems.

While the urban image politics of the 1990s were based on a strategy of increasing festivalisation through large-scale events with a broad touristic appeal(10), the creators of (sub-)culture and their surrounding background are now in the spotlight as subjects of a new norm. Following the example of Berlin in 2005(11), more and more cities

Note: A French version of this text is published in Multitudes n°31, January 2008
adorn themselves with so-called creative economies reports pinning all hopes on the ‘creative class’(12). According to Bastian Lange, these discourses and subsequent programmes disclose ‘the most recent attempt to link urban development to a new entrepreneurial group and their image value. They are the central reference point by which social questions, questions regarding economic security and the societal allocation of resources are redefined and re-negotiated’.(13) In this respect, the hype surrounding the Creative City merely shifts the reference group of a segregational urbanism. Instead of building schools, nurseries or social housing, today municipal enterprises and real estate are privatised while the installation of lofts, galleries and creative industries entrepreneurs is promoted. From this point of view the Baugruppen projects, which are very much orientated towards individual ownership, are little more than slightly denser inner-city interpretations of semi-detached houses opening up the property market for new target audiences. This may be a qualitatively different form of urbanism, which is precisely not reliant on public entrepreneurship. Its advantages however are yet to be debated.

Methodology of Self – Politics of exclusion or negotiation

According to these accounts of urban reality, organisation on the level of the individual and participation, if understood as cultural techniques and as political as well as economic models, have seemingly become the currently dominant principles. Simultaneously the Baugruppen (established with the aim of creating individual property) and the creative class, insofar it constitutes a form of cultural-economic self-management, are the new privileged operational axes of urban state politics(14). This postfordist form of urban government(15) is, as Nicholas Rose puts it following Foucault, a ‘form of governing on the basis of regulative principles, which are implemented by individual autonomous protagonists in within their personally relevant context of family of community structures’.(16)

Such a contemporary (situational) project of ‘non-interventionist’ urbanism constitutes a hegemonic version of urban governmental techniques, which not only allow and promote self-determined and autonomous thought and action, but increasingly demand it. In this process the differentiation between a methodology of autonomy and means of government blurs in the face of the ubiquitous challenge to develop the individual as resource. In accordance with the principles of managerial efficiency, the authority itself legitimates its supremacy over the personal responsibility of those acting within its framework. Furthermore up to now, only certain groups compliant with the new policy axes have been taking part autonomously, tangibly and successfully in the contraction of the built environment (or have been able to do so). This form of urbanism through individual projects can only be extended under great difficulty to include the whole breadth of society. The limits of such strategies of individualisation are for example clearly determined by the necessity of a building mortgage or substantial cultural capital. This ‘situational urbanism’ exists already and shapes the built environment to a far larger extent than the remnants of the generally applicable normative and hierarchical planning structures. The situational urbanism confronts planners and architects with the entirety of the dynamic societal realities and the resulting pluralist processes of decision-making. It forces us to no longer ignore the political, cultural, ethnic, economic, ecological and finally social aspects of planning and building. It is based upon the diversity of the everyday in urban life.

Marginal situational urbanism

Alongside the previously described and currently publicly promoted examples of personal investment and socio-spatial self-management, which coinciding with the deregulation efforts of neoliberalism, the urban reality also creates forms of situational urbanism either driven by exclusion or economies of poverty. In the first case a culturally and economically attractive clientele attempts to ‘define and realise their own interests as general interest of the society’.(17) According to Antonio Gramsci, the actions of such forces are ‘hegemonic’ and part of what can be described as a ‘hegemonic situational urbanism’. Contrasting a ‘marginal situational urbanism’ relates to themes, protagonists and spaces previously excluded by hegemonic situational urbanism, to the ignored, surpressed or illegalised forms of unplanned and uncontrolled urban development and spatial appropriation.

The Beach Bar, a by now widely accepted form of temporary use, exists for example alongside the invariably marginalised groups of trailers of the ‘Wagenburgen’. The beautified courtyards of the new owners of former social housing blocks or the new privately developed lofts with view of the water front compete successfully for attention with the different illegalised practices of street-art or the spatial self-organisation of migrant stakeholders. While the former tend to promote urban social and spatial segregation(18), the later remain largely invisible and oppressed. Marginal spaces emerge, which escape the discourses of spatial planning and design by not conforming to the hegemonic principle of normality or are simply considered undesirable.

Planning through advocacy

However, as early as 1965 Paul Davidoff emphasised in his article ‘Pluralism and Advocacy in Planning’(19), the importance of independent planners: professional and paid, they could uncover the interests of the citizens as ‘advocates’ in order to develop alternatives together with them. In this position they would have the task to inform the implicated about the background, meaning and impact of the planning proposals and put them in the position to ‘answer in the technical language of the professional planner’. These considerations aim to give people and groups, which are not represented by or excluded from planning, a voice and so to extend the range of discussed alternatives by their position. They were based on the increase of self-organisation and willingness to participate of citizens not only in the US. The here articulated societal contradictions and pluralities refer to different requirements regarding the built environment, or rather -according to Manuel Castells- to different
perceptions of the meaning of urbanism(20). Davidoff always understands planning as expression of such different values as ‘indispensable elements of any rational decision-making process’. (21) Planning expresses political interests, which need to be named in order to be able to evaluate planning in the first place. For Davidoff planning through advocacy invites openly to ‘review and discuss political and social values’ (22). This argumentation, which caused a wave of planning through advocacy projects (23), can also be related to a project of a situational urbanism. If one perceives the urban reality as an ensemble pervaded by the most diverse forces and if one recognizes its inconsistency and openness, the constrained and furthermore economic-politically structured perspective of planning needs to be countered. Such a project addresses the interests, lifestyles and places, which receive hardly any or no attention in the predominant planning process and hence are in constant conflict with and simultaneous close connection to the hegemonies within a situational urbanism.

New participation through concrete negotiations
It is possible to deduce perspectives for new, conflict relevant negotiations from the principles of participation - even if in the meantime they seemingly merged into the context of ‘Good Governance’ concepts and programmes for ‘personal responsibility’, ‘communities of citizens’ or ‘civil society’. Even if it seems to be an academic consensus that participation has lost its impact and mainly generates consensus orientated thinking and action. (24) Such a pragmatically constrained understanding of participation aims to dissolve all potentials and uncertainties and to integrate all resistance.

Community Design Centre
If one understands participation as a practice of negotiation in contrast to plain individual initiative or self-organisation, then the principle of conflict as driving force gains vital importance. Always shaped by integration and antagonism, participation rules out any supposedly permanent consensus. By implying ‘partaking in’ or ‘codetermination of’, participation is only conceivable as a relationship of power structures, into which one can advance or into which one is admitted and where one is always in negotiation with at least one counterpart. Participation challenges power. It expounds the question in how far and to which objective involvement is desirable, can be claimed, gained through struggles, allowed, promoted or practiced. Hereby participation is exactly not ‘private self-government’, ‘perceived partaking’ nor the ‘production of consensus’, but a condition of the social, a condition of the political. In the US an advanced form of participative architecture pursuing such a practice of negotiation in planning and building is currently spreading in the context of so-called ‘Community Design’ (25). Originating in the in the context of the planning through advocacy movement founded by Paul Davidoff, there nationwide around one hundred ‘Community Design Centres’. They mostly operate as local non-profit organisations and thereby principally work for and with people marginalised by the prevalent production of space. In doing so they function as mainly voluntary organisations, as socio-politically engaged planning offices or are part of the faculties for architecture, urban, regional or landscape planning within universities.

The New York ‘Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development’ is the oldest and one of the biggest Community Design Centres while the ‘Rural Studio’, which is internationally well-known for its live projects in Hale County/Alabama, is part of a university. The ‘Design Corp’ engages itself in particular for the disadvantaged but operates nationwide and independently of any academic institutions. Its founder and director Bryan Bell vehemently advocates interventions in the production of buildings, which in the US takes place to 98% without architects. (26) The ‘CDC Pittsburgh’ on the other hand focuses on citizen-orientated planning and building, while the Brooklyn ‘Center for Urban Pedagogy’ involves schools and universities in interdisciplinary strategies while simultaneously communicating an understanding of spatial planning to various urban milieus. (27)

The breadth of possible engagement is also exemplified by the ‘Hamer Centre for Communit Design Assistance’ (28). As part of the ‘Pennsylvania State University’ the institute conducts projects ranging from theoretical-scientific to ‘On-Site’ ones. In the framework of a so-called ‘Design-Build’ projects, tutors and students have been realising mud- and straw bale housing and community projects with a Native American community for several years. Practical and scientific work accumulates in a project for the recycling of construction materials derived from the destruction or demolition of buildings. (29) The director of the Centre, Michael Rios, for whom architecture as well as urban, regional and landscape planning constitute a political field of activity, researches in how far the practices of the “Community Design Centres contribute to an increased ability and strengthening of the US democracy. (30)

In particular the context of the restructuring and reconstruction schemes in New Orleans, which was destroyed by the hurricane Katrina, the Afro-American population is confronted with race motivated decisions on resettlements and demolitions, which are labelled justified for ecological reasons. The Community Design Centres have opposed these plans through integrative reconstruction projects in the same areas. (31)

There are also Community Design activities taking place in the context of ‘New Urbanism’, where ‘Community’ tends to refer to the dimension of the planable unit and a homogenous privileged social class. From this viewpoint the increasing popularity of Community Design, also at universities, does no longer primarily originate in socio-political idealism, but is linked just as closely with its prospect as a promising field of action for architects and urban, regional and landscape planners. (32)

Pluralist-antihegemonic urbanism
The multitude of contemporary spatial practices, which the publication in archplus 176 describes with the term ‘situational urbanism’, are related to the withdrawal of the
social and spatially homogenising state welfare, which is no longer seen as feasible. The thereby produced spatial marginalisation contradict however the potentials implicit within situational urbanism. It is only imaginable as an anti-hegemonic and pluralist urbanism by referring to all forces active in this field. It would negotiate these deviations and not marginalise deviation by explicitly encompassing the entirety of individual and collective everyday practices as well as the uncoordinated production of space.

If the Baugruppen, even though partially formed for idealistic reasons, really should be considered a form of ‘social urbanism’, the increasing demand for community-orientated forms of living should not be solely seen as a new market for the economically strong middle classes. In particular those increasingly pushed out of the housing market through the privatisation of social housing stock need to be supported independently of education and financial assets with strategies encouraging self-determination and community orientation. (33) Projects concerning temporary uses currently establishing themselves should vigorously question the accessibility and disposition of their space, in order to so resists the growing pressures of urban politics orientating themselves purely economically by the concept of the ‘Creative City’.

At the moment mainly urban and regional planning departments, associated sociologists and pedagogues and various urban activists deal with a planning approach, which addresses problems caused by itself. Dedicated architects on the other hand preferably move towards the areas of action within the fine and visual arts and visual communication, where in part they contribute valuable work. As part of the creative class, they risk however to directly amplify the tendencies of marginalisation through such generally temporary projects, which often refuse to deal with practical politics, whereby their own role in often precarious employment within the creative industries is mostly hopefully overlooked. On the other hand the Rural Studio slogan ‘Just Do It’, the motto of Architects for Humanity: ‘Design Like You Give A Damn’ or ‘Design Corps’ thesis ‘Designing for the 98% Without Architects’ indicate a socially committed pragmatism which risks to enthusiastically constrain the role of the planners and architects as supporters in times of need. An approach, which primarily aims to treat the symptoms of the problem, tends to keep the causes invisible and hence depoliticises well-meaning planning. Architecture can do more than that.

However, in order really affect the given situation, planning and design need to be relevant to the everyday, orientated towards needs, process-based and intervene communicatively, in particular if they are operating on a small scale. They need to challenge the societal limit of action and the structural forces inherent in the situation. Only the refusal of certain normative conditions opens up a realistic chance to negotiate a situational space leading beyond what is inscribed in the spatial-social situation. (34)

Translation from German by Stefanie Rhodes

(2) www.fh-hamburg.de/stadt/Aktuell/behoerden/stadtentwicklung-umwelt/bauen-wohnen/baegemeinschaften/start.html
(3) www.wohnprojektatlas-bayern.de
(4) www.tuebingen-suedstadt.de/9+B6JnJlbmRicla9NSZjSGFZaD03NTBjMlnMjMDE10.html
(5) www.wohnprojekte-berlin.info
(6) www.selbstnutzer.de
(7) www.fgwa.de
(8) Rüdiger Soldt, ‘Wo die Salzkristalle leuchten’, FAS, 8, October 2006, p.9
(9) For more detail on this issues see Jesko Fezer ‘Design City’, in Designmaii: Designicity. Design for Urban Space and the Design City Discussion (Berlin: 2006), pp. 29 – 84
(12) These studies are mainly criticised for the narrowing of the understanding of ‘creativity’ regarding the creation of profit. It is also problematic that they include artists, writers, musicians, architects, all kinds of designers as well as software developers, but exclude for example an ecologically innovative craftworker. See also Urbane Subsistence als Infrastruktur der Stadt, a study of and reasoning for the recognition and promotion of urban subsitanciy as important element of a functioning community: ‘Every time economy and politics talk of work, only formal work reimbursed and motivated by a monetary salary is meant, in short, gainfull employment, and only this type of work is counted towards employment figures. In reality though (...) more than three fifths of all working hours in Germany are performed without formal income, while the gainful employment endorsed with formal contracts constitutes less than two fifths of all working hours’. Gerhard Scherhorn, J. Daniel Dahm, Anja Siebentritt-Schüle, Walter Jansen, Universität Hohenheim, Institut für Haushalts- und Konsumökonomik, 2001–2004, www.uni-hohenheim.de/e3v/00217110/02541041.html
Governmental Use

The Palace of the Socialists, in-between and after

The debate on the tearing down of the East German hybrid, Palace of the Republic, as well as the reconstruction of the old city palace right in the centre of Berlin can be read as a tipping point of revisionism. Looking at the cultural policies connected with these changes, I would like to focus on the Palace of the Republic as a controversial house of culture, tracing its fortunes from the anti-fascist founding of culture houses in the GDR, to the subcultures that flourished following reunification, to current practices of ‘temporary use’. The ‘temporary use’ of the ruin now dubbed the ‘People’s Palace’ in the summers of 2004 and 2005, put another roof over the heads of the alliance between sceptical local politicians and post-reunification impresarios and event managers emerging from Berlin’s neue Mitte area. The Palace of the Republic functioned in this case as a squeaky hinge between independent experiments and ceremonial state events.

Are the Young Pioneers of Socialist days now turning into late-Capitalist Urban Pioneers? How have the interrelationships of culture, city and politics changed? How can we begin at the point where structures and buildings are destroyed, a process couched in terms such as ‘phasing out’ or ‘deconstruction’, and then productively invoke their historical sediments? In other words, how can we tell a story backwards, starting from the end?

Freedom Palace (1)

The book Fun Palace 200X opens with an impressive picture story about the reconception of the Berlin palace area on which the Palace of the Republic stood after the War. It starts with the Communist Karl Liebknecht proclaiming the Socialist republic and the end of the monarchy from the palace balcony on 9th November 1918; a day later, Emperor Wilhelm II takes off into exile in the Netherlands, swiftly emptying the palace of its contents; plundering revolutionary soldiers occupy the interior; now state property, the building is used for various activities between the wars (as public cafeteria, Museum of Applied Arts, Mexico library, Museum of Physical Exercise, Psychological Institute of nearby Humboldt University, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), a home for unmarried female students, rehearsal stage...
for the State Theatre, temporary exhibitions, the wine cellar of Luther & Wegener, etc.). The republican palace is used as a people’s palace; the 24 ‘Historical Living Chambers’ of the Emperor and his wife are opened up for viewing in 1926. This was the first time they were seen by the public.

After bombing during the Second World War, the inner courtyard is used to plant vegetables and in 1946 an exhibition is mounted called Berlin Plant.(2) Packed full of pictures, an exhibition marking the centennial of the March Revolution of 1848 uses the ruined edifice as backdrop. ‘After 32 years of temporary use, the palace will be demolished,(3) a picture from autumn 1950 announces. The rubble was piled up to make a hill in Friedrichshain Park.

In the fall of 1950, the GDR regime razed the still half-intact war ruin that had been the City Palace. It could have been possible to restore the structure. Only ‘Portal IV’ with the balcony from which Liebknecht proclaimed the revolution was preserved, and used in the 1960s as an entrance to the State Council Building. Today, the private Hertie School of Governance resides here. For the next 23 years, the area lay idle. Once in a while a grandstand was set up from which guests of honour could watch military exercises on the field.

After 20 years during which various plans were hatched, on 2nd November 1973 the cornerstone was laid for the ‘House of the People’, the Palace of the Republic – in the same year incidentally as that of the hyper-culture machine, the Centre Pompidou in Paris. After just two-and-a-half years of construction, the opening was celebrated on 25th April 1975. The palace was designed to house the East German People’s Parliament and SED party events as well as serving as an assembly hall for the Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth – FDJ) and the unions. But the innumerable visitors above all took advantage of the abundant cultural and culinary offerings that were available there right up to the very end.

The multifunctional building ended up being used for a whole 13 years. From 18th March to 18th September 1990, the freely elected East German Parliament met there, and then dissolved itself on 2nd October when it joined the Federal Republic of Germany. Now the building has stood empty for a further 13 years, since asbestos was discovered in the walls. The 70-million-euro decontamination left nothing standing but a steel skeleton with floors. ‘Selective deconstruction’ is what they call this slow demolition, and that’s what the building looks like: ‘Today, the angular box across from the Berlin Cathedral with its blind windows and graffiti looks more like a 185-by-85-metre factory complex that is sorely in need of renovation.’(4) A rough structure, no longer or not yet the palace of a bygone or still-to-be-founded republic.

Winds of Change

‘First of all, I find it paradoxical that we are now concerning ourselves with a palace. No one had anything good to say about this building when it was still intact […] there was not one colleague who would have defended it. Apparently, it was impossible for a long time to understand the beauty of this type of architecture.’(5)

When it was time for the building that was once used without question to be ‘phased out’, like most of the GDR operations, controversy arose. The voices of protest came mostly from the eastern part of the city, usually from pensioners or people from PDS circles (the PDS is the successor to the SED party of GDR times), who were in turn quickly accused of exhibiting Stalinist sentimentality and stuffiness. Ostalgie(6) was only the most polite description used to explain the fact that in 1993 no less than ninety-eight percent of East Berliners surveyed were in favour of preserving the edifice.

A year prior to that, the Bundestag had resolved the demolition of the palace ruin. Reconstructed based on old photographs -the plans are regarded as lost- the new palace hybrid was to serve as the Humboldt Forum, housing a collection of non-European art and the city library, as well as the scientific collection of Humboldt University. The strange thing is that this decision was being made by a national parliament.

During the renewed interim period, the palace area has been used as a fairground, for art actions and Christmas markets, political education and for erecting a palace replica made of printed plastic panels,(7) for a cabaret circus tent, beach volleyball contests and as a place to camp in mobile homes. The empty ruin was a station on the tour of the 180 fake Chinese terracotta soldiers, interrupted by a carpeted congress of the Federation of German Industries (BDI) for 1,500 invited guests and then-Chancellor Schroeder. ‘The upheaval of the past must now make way for a reawakening – in Germany as well as in Europe,’ declared BDI President Michael Rogowski in his keynote speech. ‘That’s why this is a fitting place, as symbol of the historical transformation that took place in the years 1989–90, for an annual conference based on the slogan: “For an attractive Germany in a new Europe.”’(8)

Berlin’s Culture Senator Thomas Flierl, a member of the PDS party and an opponent of the palace demolition, mockingly welcomed ‘the selection of event venue by the BDI. Since it may be assumed that none of the members of the entrepreneurs’ association or the invited guests from politics and commerce has a nostalgic relationship to the Palace of the Republic, the BDI’s choice underscores the value of the palace ruin as event venue and platform for social understanding in the heart of the city. Following the terracotta exhibition and the BDI conference, the palace will now be used for three months as a location for various cultural projects.’(9)
Suddenly, the wind was blowing in a new direction, and a group of ‘interim palace users’ surrounding architect Philipp Oswaldt, who publishes more than he builds, put themselves at the forefront of a movement that had already long existed. They claimed the palace for themselves, but now from the perspective of Western subculture. ‘The off-scene wants to take over a small part of the centre,’ is how urban sociologist Werner Sewing described this claim.(10) ‘This experiment can be seen as an attempt by the young cultural scene to capture a piece of the city centre.’(11) To put it more strongly, the fringes want to become part of the centre. This movement is supported by some of the German cultural institutions and the media.’(12)

The three-month-long ‘interim cultural use’, boldly dubbed the ‘People’s Palace’, ended in late autumn 2004 in the bitter cold. By then, paddleboats had plied their way across an artificial lake, techno had been discussed and dance performances taken place. The history of the actual location remained obscure, however, except for when a living panorama of Young Pioneers was set up on artificial turf, or a collection of standing lamps was shown as an illustration of Erich’s Lampenladen (‘Erich’s Lamp Store’, as the palace foyer with its elaborate hanging lights was commonly known in GDR days). One year later, the concept of the People’s Palace was revisited, with an artificial mountain range featuring tour guides, and the press was full of fun news from the palace. By the end of 2005, nine hundred and sixteen events with a total of 550,000 visitors had been conducted there.(see the list in the PDF publication by Urban Catalyst).(13)

Counter-Culture HQ
Rem Koolhaas described the location as ‘a headquarters for the counter-culture’(14); the publishers of Fun Palace 200X see themselves as being in the middle of a ‘religious war in the spirit of the Cold War’. (15) Certainly, there is a massive lobby for the demolition of the palace and the creation of a replacement. ‘20 million euros have even been spent so far to prevent you from doing it’(16), is how Mark Wigley described the fact that the state wants to lay out a lawn for this sum in order to literally let grass grow over the issue.

Although politically contentious, the opening of the People’s Palace was attended by many politicians, who gave speeches before the huge crowd. The state-organised Capital City Culture Fund in addition sponsored the project with an operable sum. ‘The group of initiators belongs to a certain generation. They are curators and theatre producers who are already well established, in their mid-30s or mid-40s,’ said musician Christoph Dell, describing the milieu of the creative activists. (17) The two initiators Philipp Misselwitz and Philipp Oswalt view the ruined Palace of the Republic as a construction site for a new ‘Capital of Talents’, a form of ‘cultural appropriation of the location’, a ‘test of alternative scenarios’ involving ‘many actors from the high and sub-culture’. (18)

Christoph Dell depicts the situation as something between self-exploitation and accumulation of symbolic capital for later posts: ‘For this generation, the changes of the 1960s are second nature. Participation and self-help are no longer discussed […] An unreflected acceptance of self-engagement means nothing other than a way to procure cheap labour.’ (19)

The interconnections between culture, city and politics have undergone palpable changes in the ‘Berlin Republic’. In the process, the ‘cultural industry’ has congealed into an urban development factor. ‘The culturalisation of debates on urban development policy, all the talk of architecture that now replaces discussions on possible uses, offer themselves as a method, because there is certainly no lack of illustrative material,’ comments political scientist Karin Lenhardt.(20)

Urban Action
‘The action “Deconstruction X” […] became a founding myth, and it still seems to us programmatic for our understanding of what “Municipal Action” means: entering the public sphere and naming the conflicts we presume to exist in the respective location, which we have often only read about or vaguely sensed.’(21)

The destruction of the Palast der Republik has an almost forgotten pretext: When, in a cloak-and-dagger action, the East German Foreign Ministry was subject to a ‘deconstruction’ – in other words torn down – this spelled the end of one of the icons of the formerly self-assured East German political status. In June 1995, the ‘freies fach’, a group of independent architecture students from Berlin, demonstratively anticipated the coming demolition, carting off façade sections they had marked in red. The owner of the high-rise – by this time it belonged to the demolition company – reported the premature ‘deconstruction’ to the police and the press. The protest action could not however prevent the ‘official’ tearing down of a central representative element of the former GDR regime a few days later.

The ‘freies fach’ was founded by a group of students in 1995, and later changed into the editorial team of An Architektur magazine. They viewed themselves as a corrective to the architecture education at the University of the Arts in Berlin and elsewhere: ‘In addition to the theoretical treatment of the political constructs of city and space, we tried to develop concrete protest actions and interventions based on the examination and analysis of the object. With temporary and symbolic collective conversions of public and private spaces, we tried out various appropriation experiments, dramatisations
of alternative urban myths or harmless sabotage of the possibilities of “Municipal Action”.(22)  

**Party & Politics**

Following reunification, party and politics were closely intertwined. New venues appropriate to informal activities made room for subcultural or political activities, while simultaneously demonstrating all that was possible in a zone freed at least temporarily from bureaucratic regulations and prevalent ownership conditions. Without having to register everything with the municipal authority for public order, income from selling beverages could now be put towards financing technical equipment, filling solidarity cash reserves and ensuring the facilities’ further existence. These practices were connected with autonomous politics, squatting, techno and alternative culture productions in the West and East. And they brought all these together in the ‘centre’ in an exemplary fashion.

What was gathered together under the label ‘People’s Palace’, 15 years after the Wall fell was fed from seasoned practices between party and politics and built upon some of their actors. ‘Constant changes in location and the appeal of continually developing new forms of appropriation and new programmes have become part of the brand image of some Berlin clubs,’(23) was a problem faced by the new wave of clubs, such as the WMF Club. Marketed as Berlin’s calling card, it came to an end with its participation in the ‘People’s Palace’, since even the idea of constantly changing venues gets old after awhile.

To spread the word on the ‘People’s Palace,’ the entire media spectrum was called upon, from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper to Spiegel Online. And they reported positively on the idea of blessing the palace with the option of ‘temporary use’. While some celebrated the creativity of Berlin’s cultural scene, others secretly hoped that a temporary stopgap could possibly lead to a permanent solution. Named Temporary Palace Use, the project changed from a subcultural practice to more and more of an urban policy tool. ‘Functionalising (“harnessing”) cultural work for the purposes of something else echoes the Protestant-Prussian tradition of legitimating culture,’ (24) writes Horst Groschopp with reference to the GDR functionalisation of culture houses.

**Interim Solutions**

‘Interim use is not a new social phenomenon [...] Temporary uses are becoming increasingly varied, in more and more places shaping the image of the city and developing into a structural element of urban development.’(25)

The first Stadtforum Berlin 2020, inaugurated by the new Senator for Urban Development, Ingeborg Junge-Reyer, began in April 2005 by setting new accents with questions – which in terms of Capitalist urban planning naturally remained to a great extent rhetorical – like ‘Give it away? Plant a forest? Open it up for temporary use? And what to do with the free spaces?’ in relation to the ‘stone Berlin’ of her forebears: ‘Is “temporary use” a path contributing to raising a location’s profile, promising economic benefits for the city and its society, and opening up room for ideas? How can we pave the way for temporary uses? What roles and tasks can be assigned to public funding?’(26) Fittingly, the Stadtforum took place in a pumping station with a view of the Spree River that had long lain idle, as well as in a new building erected for the services union, Verdi. Afterwards, the industrial structure was rebuilt as a rehearsal and performance venue called Radialsystem V GmbH, sponsored by the private sector for the dance company established by Sascha Waltz.

‘Nothing less than a total departure from the kind of urban development designed for posterity,’ is how the astounded taz Berlin newspaper editor Gereon Asmuth, himself as post-reunification squatter, described the well-attended afternoon event. ‘The show sponsored by Junge-Reyer shows residential gardens in Friedrichshain, city beaches and the arena that has emerged from a “gentle squatting” and has long since established itself as a cultural centre. Today, people are even proud of trailer parks – still a blot on the cityscape back in the 1990s. Now they are suddenly pioneers, even in the eyes of a Senator [...] The state doesn’t have any money, but for it all the more unused real estate.’(27) Temporary uses help to buy time, delay decisions, allow for experiments and error.

**Creative Economy**

‘Bathing Ship, trailer parks, East Beach: this is the reality’ –is how Uwe Rada describes the new developments on the Berlin cityscape in the taz Berlin newspaper.

“The squatting of the 1980s represented temporary use just as does the Vitra Design Museum, the “People’s Palace” and Alexandra Hildebrand’s wooden crosses at Checkpoint Charlie.’(28) The list of Berlin projects undertaken by the ‘urban pioneers’ is a long one: skaters’ park, flea market, intercultural garden, beach bar, trailer park, house boat, bathing ship with winter sauna, the ‘Bundespressestrand’(29) beach, golf course, climbing bunker, beach volleyball,(30) party zone, theatre tent, open-air cinema, children’s farmyard, dog park, tent park, art arena, but also the Nike Sport Park, commercial through-and-through.

Boom-oriented city policies following reunification only turned their attention reluctantly to projects outside the masterplan: ‘So it’s no wonder that many temporary uses only spring up in places where those in charge at the district and senate departments
interpret the regulations pro-actively.’(31) The transformation now taking place in Berlin city politics is more than evident: from the explosive boomtown architecture after the fall of the Wall to more of a ‘muddling through’ in other instances.

‘Berlin is a laboratory for the undertaking known as temporary use,’ remarks the Building Senator in her foreword to the publication Urban Pioneers, written by dedicated temporary use researcher Klaus Overmeyer on behalf of the Building Administration. ‘Creative “not-yet enterprises”’ with little capital but a large dose of engagement utilise the opportunities remaining in the gaps between ownership and ‘are in most cases not only space pioneers but also survival artists when it comes to the management of their own self-fulfilment.’(32) Over 90,000 people are actively involved in ‘Berlin’s creative economy’ according to the report of the Cultural Affairs Department in 2005 – 50 percent of them as ‘single entrepreneurs’.

‘This data makes the changeover from a “welfare” state to an “activating” social state very apparent,’(33) says Bastian Lange, describing the neoliberal urban and social policies in Urban Pioneers. Radical deindustrialisation makes way for new ‘creative’ locations for ‘space entrepreneurs […] They take advantage of temporary use as a springboard for their careers.’(34) Those left in the lurch by the industrial world of work will not however be setting off down this path. Once well cared-for as the ‘Young Pioneers of the East German state and furnished with ‘Salons of the Socialists’ near to their workplace, they have been forgotten by the companies—if they even exist any longer– that, after their annexation to the West German market economy, no longer take any interest in their erstwhile cultural mission. ‘Houses tied to the socialist brigade culture, workers’ theatres and railroad workers’ choirs’(35) have been phased out. And as for the former company employees, culture is becoming a luxury for them.

(1) Schlossfreiheit in general refers to the residential district also known as the Burgfreiheit in the environs of a royal residence. In 1672, a row of ten houses was built in Berlin on the banks of the Kupfergraben close to the Berlin City Palace. Here, courtiers and nobles lived under the legal principles of the Burgfreiheit until the construction of the Royal Residence in Berlin in 1709. The houses were expanded and reconstructed several times, but in principle remained standing until the end of the 19th century. Emperor Wilhelm II didn’t care at all for these relatively modest houses that blocked the view of his magnificent palace. They were thus torn down in June 1894 to make way for the Kaiser Wilhelm National Memorial.

(2) Translator’s note: this is a play on words that means ‘Berlin plans’.

(3) in Philipp Misselwitz, Philipp Oswalt, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Fun Palace 200X. Der Berliner Schlossplatz; (Berlin: Martin Schmitz Verlag, 2005)


(6) Translator’s note: ‘nostalgia for the East’.

(7) Draping a construction site for what are usually commercial purposes was further perfected in subsequent years. In order to hide the gap after the East German Foreign Ministry was torn down, for example, scaffolding covered in plastic panels was put up on the site of Schinkel’s former Academy of Architecture. Films were projected onto the structure at night in summer as well as winter, without any audience to watch them. Like the palace replica before it, the simulation is meant to drive forward the reconstruction of these vanished buildings.

(8) Extract of President Michael Rogowski’s speech; BDI press release.


(11) Actually, it is more of a re-conquering or skirmish while retreating because many of the cultural initiatives have already established themselves in Berlin Mitte.


(15) Misselwitz et al, Fun Palace 200X, p. 32.


(18) The People’s Palace project was interrupted for a short time by company events including the anniversary of the organisational and strategic consulting firm McKinsey Deutschland, featuring the New York Philharmonic and 5,000 guests. Afterwards the city’s Volksbühne (People’s Theatre), always a provocative agitator, staged Berlin Alexanderplatz after the novel by Alfred Doblin. See, Misselwitz et al, Fun Palace 200X, p. 34-35.


(22) Ibid.


(26) Press Info, Senate of Berlin

(27) Gereon Asmuth, die tageszeitung, 4 April 2005.

(28) Uwe Rada, die tageszeitung, 4 April 2005.

(29) The operators counted some 1,000 press reports with a calculated circulation of 40 million.

(30) Several interview partners indicated that they afterwards received sand for their own purposes from the generously sponsored events.

(31) cf. die tageszeitung, 4 April 2005.


(34) Senate Department et al (eds.), Urban Pioneers, p. 38.

Katherin Böhm/ public works

De Strip
Sidestepping the Brief – Artists as Planners

“...A project can only be as good as its brief.”(1)

Background
When Jeanna van Heeswijk was invited by the Municipality of Vlaardingen to propose a public sculpture masterplan for the Westwijk area, she first of all rewrote the brief to define a new space for herself and her engagement.

In an interview with Jeanne(2) she describes her shift of the brief in very spatial terms: she replaced the idea of a linear sculpture trail with the creation of open field for engagement with culture, both local and imported. Instead of curating spots within the neighbourhood at one moment in time, she suggested to work with the whole area alongside the ten year regeneration process, and to spread the art plan across the whole site and duration.

The literally and spatially linear and narrow idea of a sculpture trail was replaced by a medium-term and open field curatorial strategy that would run alongside the general regeneration of the area. Her rewritten brief allows for (and means) an involvement with a process of change. Rather than providing another detached and imported service for the area, Jeanne describes her role as a guide to the overall masterplan process, to take place in collaboration with the residents of the area, by means of interventions, discussion and propositions. The curatorial idea was that of potent interventions, and to look closely at the ongoing process of urban renewal in order to position the interventions in relation, either as a comment, facilitator or disturbing and diverting element.

Under the title Until we meet again. Heading towards Westwijk 2005, Jeanne set a conceptual and propositional framework for a cultural programme that could act across different physical, social and political fields. The initial brief to commission eight new sculptures was replaced by eight new commissions, given to both artist and local groups, to develop context and situation specific projects for the area. She effectively redistributed the commissions amongst different groups to investigate, support, question and instigate the process of change.

De Strip
The De Strip project comes out of Jeanne’s long term involvement with the Westwijk, and was set up as one of the eight Until we meet again commissions. It initially responded to the request of the owner of a recently vacated row of shops in the area, who wanted to commission an artist to paint hoarding in order to reduce future vandalism. Jeanne was pointed out to him as a ‘specialist’ of the area. Being aware of a lack of communal and dedicated cultural space in the area, she suggested to use the shop spaces, rather than just decorating the shop front, and to turn them into a new community space.

Jeanne’s methodology to create space for others through art, is to combine and cross programme a multiplicity of ideas and to run projects collaboratively. In less than three months the empty shops were converted into a multipurpose complex. De Strip was set up a multiple spatial programme for a variety of cultural practices, production and exchange. The occupation and function ranged from studios to workshops, café, an appendix by the Boijmans van Beuningen museum, show-window, a demarcated public area in front of the building, informal meeting places, etc.

A number of existing and acknowledged public spaces in the surroundings became informal parts of De Strip, such as the Newsagent who was an important communicator and distributor of information between De Strip and the local community, or the near by Chinese restaurant which became the canteen and catering service for De Strip.

De Strip was existed between May 2002 to May 2004, with 319 active participants involved, and a total of aprox 48,000 local, national and international visitors who came to see the site and to visit the 102 events (not counting the unregistered events) that took place.

Art’s involvement and manifestation within regeneration schemes
Artists are increasingly being commissioned to deliver public art and participatory projects as part of larger regeneration schemes. A new publication by the Arts Council London ‘Art in the Public Realm’ stresses the aims and benefits of a variety of public art projects and explains and promotes them to planners, regeneration bodies and developers.

As Barbara Steiner points out(10) ‘Art and culture are frequently used as “actuating potential” in connection with urban planning and marketing: first they are deployed as so called “soft” arguments and image enhancers to render urban public space attractive (...). Second, cultural and artistic practices are utilised to encourage people to make use of existing spaces, to self appropriate the city. It may be decidedly affirmative and an accomplice of a capitalist logic of exploiting upgrading strategies. At the same time, art is capable of promoting alternative identification and creating (dissident) spaces in which different types of thought and action can be discussed, developed, tested and negotiated.’ Commissioners are clearly aware of those benefits but they
hardly ever prepare the ground for real exchange and mutual influence between artists/participants and developers. This has partly to do with preconceived ideas of what art is/does and can and should contribute, combined with a lack of political will and participatory planning mechanism.

Jeanne describes the intention of her ten year cultural plan as ‘guiding a process of change’ which is fundamentally different to the principles of urban planning where, changes are being decided upon. Her approach with Until we meet again could be criticised for not clearly claiming the (conventional) role of the professional, and to exclude herself from receiving certain planning and building powers. Her position can also be read as non-conformational, but as an alternative planning proposal for change which will ultimately be conducted by residents.

Even though de De Strip has no formal planning role, it nevertheless influences and impacts on the longer planning process since it’s embedded within the Until we meet again. Heading towards Westwijk 2005 (which is now extended to 2008) master-plan. I want to list some of the aspects where De Strip produced outcomes that are generally outside of what art is expected to contribute.

Temporary Use
De Strip represents a growing number of temporary and medium-term art interventions (5), or as Jeanne calls it “infill”, which make use of existing spaces and act on an urban scale. They often either derive from activist and bottom up initiatives, or are commissioned by local authorities to provide a transitional public programme in areas of change.

The Berlin based research project Urban Catalyst has looked into temporary use as an urban phenomena and they have collected a vast number of varied case studies with the aim to read and utilise temporary occupation strategies as urban planning tools. Extract from the Urban Catalyst report (6):

‘Temporary uses are generally not considered to be part of normal cycles of urban development. If a building or area becomes vacant, it is expected to be re-planned, build over and used as soon as possible. Temporary uses are often associated with crisis, a lack of vision and chaos. But, despite all preconceptions, examples like the vital scene of Berlin’s nomadic clubs or temporary events proves that temporary uses can become an extremely successful, inclusive and innovative part of contemporary urban culture’.

On the one hand, this is a political discussion that demands a non-authoritarian way of planning. On the other hand, it is a practical and profession orientied discussion, to identify new tools and strategies for urban planning that extends and reverses some of the conventional models of planning and organising the city.

‘Despite the obvious fundamental contradiction between planned and unplanned, the research project developed a catalogue of strategies how to learn from the unplanned and how to incorporate unplanned phenomena into planning. The Urban Catalyst research team based its work on the assumption, that the informal and the formal are not contradictions. While innovation comes more form informal contexts, formal contexts ensure normally long lasting, sustainable effects. In the context of the research of Urban Catalyst it becomes crucial to integrate the informal and the formal more effectively. This means one the one hand to formalize the informal: to analyze and understand the unplanned patterns behind self-organized activities, deduct prototypes, models and tools from these investigation, formalize them and make them available to all stakeholders. One the other hand, formal procedures of planning, administration, management etc. have to be critically examined and ways and strategies to be found, how existing practices can be de-formalized, de-institutionalized, adapted and changed.’(6)

De Strip as an ‘infill’ comes with all the advantages those interventions have: ad hoc and temporary programmes, space for experiment, less official responsibilities and commitments, etc. The question is how to transfer this into a longer term strategy, by repeating and spreading them, or re-evaluating them on a regular basis? De Strip extended its initial shelf life by 6 months. Could it have been extended by 6 years? Some other cultural projects try to set examples for sustainable and ultimately self-managed projects, such as the Ecobox in Paris by aaa Architects or the Coniston Water Festival by Grizedale Arts.

The project as mapping
Art practice is increasingly discovered and commissioned as another way to survey and read areas and especially neighbourhoods(7). For De Strip it wasn’t about creating a singular portrait or image of the neighbourhood, but Jeanne describes the intention as ‘it’s about showing in how many different ways you can look at a neighbourhood’. The attention and success of De Strip project opened a debate on the clichés about deprived neighbourhoods in modernist housing complexes, their anonymity, cultural poverty, ugliness and economic hopelessness. As a result many of the residents were less willing to accept top down policies and got involved in the ongoing planning activities. On a non-local level, outside intellectuals were forced to see and understand these neighbourhoods more than abstractions, but as realities where abstracted political and aesthetetical ideas can be practiced. On planning level, we need a commitment to evaluate those ‘mappings’ in their diversity and subjectivity, rather than using them to produce a nicer image of the area.

‘Utility logics won’t do’.(8)
Cultural regeneration debates tend to utilise cultural practice for purposes that don’t necessarily reflect the critical and experimental nature of those practices. This can
also be observed in regards to the frequently quoted “Barcelona Experience” (9), where cultural regeneration meant the intersection of the urban fabric with significant cultural institutions. The cornerstone of this model is the collaboration between public-private interests, meaning the partnership between the City Council and the business community. Strategic plans and cultural events are to be legitimised on the basis of its explicit political and economic utility.

On a smaller scale the thinking of direct utility is reflected at the Westwijk, where e.g. Leo de Jong, Director Waterwegen Wonen describes positive outcomes of Until we meet again, such as a decrease in vandalism and damage, and the transformation of a unpleasant empty line of shops into a pleasant living environment, admitting that “groups and individuals in today’s society need this kind of meeting place”.(15)

Saskia Sassen sees a clear potential in art’s ability to create specific and localised experience of urban spaces on a human scale, which allows for direct cultural contribution without having to utilise culture. She calls the spaces created through an art experience ‘modest spaces’ which are generated through practice and everyday experience of the users of urban space. Most urban planning tools consider programme/activity as the filler of spatial volumes in the city, but hardly ever as the generator of spatial realities. Sassen’s comment on people’s practice as the key to generating space is crucial here, and questions the role of so called professional urban planning and spatial provision.

De Strip clearly provides a space, even a space with a clear design identity, but it foremost provides an infrastructure; a spatial facility to be used and altered, rather than a facility to be confirmed and fulfilled.

**Space through programme**

Sassen’s concept of ‘modest spaces’ clearly refers to Michel de Certeau’s position that, a ‘space is a practiced place’, as for example, when ‘the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers’.

In the case of Until We Meet Again and De Strip the programme didn’t have a central space or dedicated area, but would roam and move across different spaces and territories. Until We Meet Again slowly appropriated and temporarily occupied existing spaces in the area. Early meetings took place at the Urban Renewal Office, the commissions occupied spaces like the old Post Office, or spread across various public and private spaces in the neighbourhood. The project expanded via programme and activities and through a preset occupation plan.

An example: One of the eight commissions was given to a residents group and the artist Kamel Verschure assisted the group to formulate their concern and to realise their project. The residents were concerned about the relocation of the shopping facilities to a central point and wanted to think about their future routes to get the shopping done. Questionnaires were produced and drawings made which superimposed the routes suggested by the research of the group onto the master-plan for the area. This lead to the identification of public crossing points and potential new public spaces or spots. One blank spot is now being included and designed as a dedicated meeting place into the masterplan, preserving some existing public space and extending it.

**Informal cultural economy**

De Strip delivered immense programme on a relatively small budget, a programme that would cost a conventional organisation probably ten times the personal and financial resources.

De Strip drew extensively from Jeannes personnal and professional network. People contributed because they liked the idea and offer, and could see something in return for themselves.

De Strip doesn’t represent a conventional public funding situation, where cultural programmes are delivered on order. It rather presents a model for personal and collective cultural production that sits outside of a commercial market economy, and drives from informal and gift economies. How long and how often this could be repeated is open for questioning. When do participants start to be exploited? When does the genuine balance of giving and taking get out of hand? How does the informal economy and creation of values sit, and become recognised, within a commercially driven regeneration set up.

**Traditions of planning**

The Westwijk area represents post WW2 traditions in urban planning, and was presented at the 1957 International Construction Exhibition in Berlin, representing The Netherlands as a showcase for a new integration of architecture in planning. It is a well known fact that people never completely fit with city planners schemes, and in the case of the Westwijk the original plan lacked a sense of territory and identity, and the grouping of housing was experienced as random rather than creating a community.

Neighbourhoods like Westwijk heve ben designed and planned for the emancipation of the rural classes and formerly rural families, where they could be ‘taught’ how to become more urban citizens and to integrate. ‘From the composition of the current population of Westwijk and how its residents behave, it is evident that it is once again facing the same problems of emancipation and integration, and these can evidently be tackled in the same physical context. (…) While the planning disciplines hesitate to address socio political issues, artists are pulling the chestnut out of the fire. The risks of this position are clear: the government, commissioners and planners genuinely...
appreciate such projects, but see them primarily as a means to ameliorate the negative effects of restructuring; definitely not as a serious alternative to the standard methodology’.(11)

Artists as planner
Perhaps the claim to allow for such cultural projects to become an equal planning partner, together with the participants and residents involved, has to be fought on a more political level and outside the art context, and more within an urban planning and cultural regeneration debate.

It is impossible to imagine De Strip if it would have been devised and executed by ‘professional’ planners. An official planning and design process would have infinitively struggled with issues of aesthetics, budget, planning regulations, agreements and contracts. Whereas the De Strip team managed to build up a team of very diverse cultural producers and organisations to be involved in the programming and running of the spaces, from individual artists to national museums like the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen. This efficiency is mainly due to Jeanne’s very extended and dedicated network, and her fierce approach to make things happen. Many of the involvements and engagements of others were based on informal relationships and mutual agreements, which demonstrates again that informal structures are highly productive forces which are ignored and repressed by formalised structures and procedures. This conflict between formalised procedures and informal dynamics explains some of the difficulties when it comes to implementing short term/temporary interventions into long term planning.

Colliding procedures
It is not just the procedures which collide, it’s also the roles and responsibilities given to the different practitioners/actors/professionals within regeneration schemes. It’s not commonly assumed that art/culture can generate knowledge and dynamics, which are directly applicable to urban planning and design processes. The artist is still either seen as the ‘decorator’ to equip the urban landscape with objects, such as sculptures, hoarding paintings and slightly more extravagant public furniture. Or the artist is considered ‘community’ compatible, which means she/he/they have access to communities which remain closed towards official bodies, and can therefore generate better community liaisons and relationships.

The artists is not seen as a planner, since its contribution is seen as within the production of an independent piece/project, rather than the contribution to a wider planning matter. This doesn’t mean that every artist who works in the public realm should get involved in planning, but it means that those involved in cultural regeneration should regard the artists as another equal member on the planning team.

The effectiveness of De Strip in terms of having an input into planning and resulting in some long term changes, both physically and strategically, are down to Jeanne’s ambition and vision, rather than to the intentions of the planning and commissioning groups in charge.

(1) Clare Cumberlidge / General Public Agency, during a presentation at the Rural Art Space Symposium in Shrewsbury 17 January 2007
(2) The Westwijk, a borough housing 16,000 people, is a suburb in the Municipality of Vlaardingen and part of the wider Rotterdam conurbation. Large parts were designed in 50ies and 60ies, following functional and geometrical urban planning patterns. The Westwijk is currently undergoing a major regeneration scheme with the aim to more make it more attractive, to raise the quality and identity of the place and to integrate art and culture into the urban development. The original 10 year masterplan for the area is called “Westwijk 2005”, which has now been extended until 2008
(3) Interview with Jeanne van Heeswijk, March 2007, for more information on her practice www.jeanneworks.net
(4) Barbara Steiner, Director Gallery for Contemporary Art in Leipzig, in her lecture during the Under Construction series by the European Kunsthalle project in Cologne, March 2007, see also www.eukunsthalle.com
(5) Other examples are illustrated in Temporary Urban Spaces, Florian Haydn and Robert Temel (Editors), published by Birkhäuser, Basel, Boston, Berlin, 2003
(6) www.templace.com, an online resource of tools and strategies for temporary occupation
(7) Urban Catalyst Research Report to download (http://www.templace.com/thinkpool/attach/download)

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Henri Lefebvre's argument that space is a social product rather than being a frozen and static entity has been a threshold for the study of space. He introduced three concepts of space: spatial practice is the space of a society that is secreted by that society; representations of space is the dominant space of the planners, architects and social engineers and representational space is space that is lived by its users. In the space of modernity, homogenised and ordered abstract space took over historical space and made the representations of space triumph over representational space. Abstract space is about the silence of its users. However as noted by Lefebvre, abstract space is not without contradictions. Despite - or rather because of - its negativity, abstract space carries within itself the seeds of a new kind of space. I shall call that new space 'differential space', because, inasmuch as abstract space tends towards homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences. It will also restore unity to what abstract space breaks up - to the functions, elements and moments of social practice.

The differential space that emerges out of the contradictions of abstract space can make use of the technology that abstract space uses to improve its applications. Both the connections between the fragments of the space that are disrupted under capitalism, and the uniqueness of the space that is lost under homogenisation, can be restored via these new technologies. The media that played a role in these processes of homogenisation and fragmentation can also be used to reverse these processes. Video is a technology that can be used in this fashion. It is a medium that can produce differential space by putting an end to the silence of its users. More than being just a visual medium, video is a practice where the processes of production, and dissemination create a set of relations that bring urbanites together and empower them to speak up for themselves. What video can do in urban space is also about particularities and heterogeneity, and is shaped by the multiple and heterogeneous practices of its users.

Another concept that is appropriate in terms of the use of video practice in the city would be to define it as a tactic, in the sense of Michel de Certeau's use of the term. According to de Certeau, a 'tactic' acts in the place of a 'strategy' and within that place it manoeuvres and manipulates events to turn them into opportunities. Many everyday practices are tactics and they all use and manipulate the place of the strategies and turn them to their own advantage. 'A tactic' must vigilantly, make use of the cracks, that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse. In short, a tactic is an art of the weak. Today's urban life challenges the totalising discourse on space, which tries to produce a city that is spatially as well as politically and psychologically rationalised. But it is at the same time full of contradictory movements that 'counterbalance' the urbanistic discourse and escape the panoptic power. Instead of focusing on the decay of this totalising discourse, one can look at the microbe-like practices that outlived this decay, that insinuate themselves in the network of surveillance and make up of everyday practices.

'Tactics' cannot be represented, because they cannot be fixed in one place. Video practice in the context of the city is not a representation, it is one of the microbe-like activities. It insinuates itself into the space it creates in the place of the urban discourse. Through video we can have a feeling, a glimpse of the contradictory movements in the city that escape the totalising eye of the panopticon. These movements could be local resistances against the strategies dominant in the city, whether these are local social movements (feminists, environmentalists, LGBTTT ...) or resistances against the top-down transformations of the city. Against the unitary and finalised accounts of official history, video can capture the multiple and evolving histories of the city. The official history of the city does not give a voice to urbanites but rather tells their stories for them; it freezes the history and creates an image that is immune to any intervention. Through video, city dwellers get a chance to tell their own (hi)stories while at the same time creating them.

What we can say about the subversive uses and transformative capacities of video in general, and in the context of the city in particular, is deemed to be restricted to what we learn out of its practices. Video - or any other technology - does not possess an inherent 'emancipatory' capacity. With its fragmented and heterogeneous nature, the postmodern city inherits endless capacities for its own transformation. Video can make use of these capacities to create more cracks in which life can infiltrate.

A testimony (excerpt from ‘Process as film practice’)  
Our participatory video practice is organic and grew step-by-step. The first initiative was a project in which I personally became involved. The renovation and redesign of a public square in Sint-Joost-ten-Node (edge district NE of Brussels centre, -tr.). That project was run on a neighbourhood contract, a governmental initiative designed to stimulate the residents of communities to get involved with interventions into the public spaces. Since we had no reason to trust the official reports issued by the municipality, we decided to record proceedings with architects and officials on video. These registrations served to allow us to take a critical look at the meetings after the fact. This led to the use of the camera in other situations. Since we were interested in the visions of the people...
involved in this community project – multitudes that seldom see the light of day when it comes to these things – we even set up video workshops and studios.

The results of the video workshops were presented at a showing and discussed during meetings, and from that grew other images and viewpoints about the neighbourhood and about that square in particular. This way, we conducted some twenty interviews with people who were involved with the community contracts: extended personal discussions about their participation in the decision-making process. We arranged that material according to theme, on separate cassettes. In this way we linked statements about, for example, police, renewal projects, public space or participation all together with each other. With the help of in-house suggestions, we could develop a group dynamic. Minister for Metropolitan Development Charles Picqué invited us, the collective of artists and unemployed ‘Plus Tôt Te Laat’, to come and discuss the use of video in such projects. We decided to distill a video out of the raw, recorded material, a work that relates the story of the group interaction involved in the process of a community contracting project.

In only a few weeks time, we selected and presentation-mounted a pre-selection relying on the same participatory methods. With this we wanted to launch a dialogue with the local government about how such a group participation in a concrete project could function. Even before that symposium led by Picqué, we showed the video to a group of politicians, members of the administration, and residents. The video was rather negatively received, especially by the people who hadn’t taken part in the participatory editing process. Some of the viewers only had eyes for the representative character of the video, and proposed that too little emphasis had been placed on the positive aspects of the project. The group had actually wanted to use this work to open a discussion about the functioning of this type of participation in a community contract, taken out of their own experiences. That discussion too was recorded as a definitive montage, of images: for example on our way to an interview, we may meet somebody sitting in a car and this will also be included in the archive. Such a thing must also make up a part of that archive, since it’s possible someone could work with it further. In this way a collective archive doesn’t become influenced or guided by determined meanings but it is time-consuming to construct. It is a large and dormant potential that, for diverse and multiple reasons, can be awakened as and when needed. With our video group we establish a ‘community of interest’ within the media, which is itself a group that would like to co-opt images as well as the instruments of image-making. This sort of access to the media thus not only has to do with the communal and intersubjective process of giving meaning via images. Next to this, the videotapes are not only accessible to everyone who is linked to our archive, but the participants in the video ateliers are also proud owners of their own video cassettes they can show, and that can thus be incorporated once again and used in the dynamics of the neighbourhood.

Parallel to that we made, at the initiative of the participants in the video group, short video tapes of these residents. We stimulated them to take on a more personal standpoint and to project that in a very clear manner. In this way all relevant themes concerning life in the community could be given a chance. And in case the testimonies held a specific view or a theme that we could all work on further, the filming could then transform and even end up being as important as a marriage celebration. The importance of such contributions, and that of the viewpoints assumed, appeared only afterwards, after the first recordings had been seen and also discussed by the group. By re-editing we could delve farther into the layers of meaning. In such a way the film “La joyeuse entrée du bourgmestre dans sa commune Bruxelloise” (The joyous occasion of the entrance of the city mayor in his Brussels’ community), images of the carnival in Schaarbeek could then be mounted together with fragments taken from the paraphrased painting by James Ensor. Thus results an absurd, macabre and populist look at the carnival.

To close I would like to point out the importance of our archive and how we relate to it. At this moment we have access to around 120 hours of material and this includes not only recordings of the participation group from the community contract, but the archive also contains more than 20 hours of interviews. These are discussions with people including police, politicians, residents, workers from social centres or labourers following a professional training. Our archive is not only communal in the sense that everyone can look at the recordings, it is above all else a living archive which can be added to by other creators. It is also open to becoming a source for a diversified range of images: for example on our way to an interview, we may meet somebody sitting in a car and this will also be included in the archive. Such a thing must also make up a part of that archive, since it’s possible someone could work with it further. In this way a collective archive doesn’t become influenced or guided by determined meanings but it is time-consuming to construct. It is a large and dormant potential that, for diverse and multiple reasons, can be awakened as and when needed. With our video group we establish a ‘community of interest’ within the media, which is itself a group that would like to co-opt images as well as the instruments of image-making.

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Once again, we find it necessary to talk about the basic agenda of our practices.(slide 2)

We are seeing the emergence of many projects that seem to be using the methods developed by artists and activists in a way that, far from being emancipatory, instrumentalises them instead as new tools of government. In our talk, we will refer to our own projects - to park fiction; to ‘kosmos hamburg’, a collaboration between Margit Czenki and Hajusom; and to the recent vi-deotaxi. (p. 32-33 of this book). We are very grateful for these precise questions that Doina Petrescu and Constantin Petcou sent to us before our meeting, questions which we answer here:

TO ALLOW SHARED EXPERIENCE AND COLLABORATION

aaa’s question 1:
What is a collective platform and how can it operate? / What dynamics could be created in order to allow experience and collaboration? (slide 3)

A platform has to be accessible. Moreover, it should create accessibility. Accessibility is not (only) a technological question, but a process - cultural codes, for instance, might work to effectively exclude members of the lower classes, while the language spoken in universities, or the language of questionnaires in state-organised planning processes perfectly suits the domesticated children of the middle class.(slide 4)
When Park Fiction decided to organise a planning process like a game, the reason was to create a multiplicity and diversity of access points. The rollable platforms in the aaa project ECObox created stages for cooking, reading, working with media etc., and thus managed to create different access points for these activities and raised them all onto one level. The question of access also has to be followed through the course of a whole process: often access is only granted at early stages of planning processes, but not in the phase of realisation.

‘Making Each Other More Clever’ (ME-O-MC) is the opposite of assuming a seemingly ‘Neutral Position of Administration’ (N-POV). ME-O-MC only works, if collaborators are curious about each others’ ideas, so that people from different backgrounds - for instance, from political activism and art - do not fight each other, as usual, but engage in and create productive exchange.

This drawing nearly didn’t make it into the planning process, because the social worker who got this drawing from a local girl did not recognise it as a design for the park. And yet it showed the design for a youth café with exhibition space, with letter boxes designed for those youngsters whose letters are being monitored by their parents - a great idea for how public space can serve the right to privacy. The drawing only made it into the planning process because someone had the curiosity to find out what the idea behind it actually was.

ME-O-MC does not accept that practice and experience are being cut off from theory (and vice versa).

Create situations: knowledge, thinking and exchange happen in real spaces. If you believe that universities are neutral spaces, you are not part of this. If the planning bureaucracy, for instance, invites people into their offices to participate in a planning process, the outcome will be completely different to one that takes place in an exciting situation that invites play and enjoyment. Sometimes just offering a free drink to everyone can dramatically change a situation. Create situations that make unlikely encounters more likely.

Trust & credibility: if you have no credibility among your people, you can forget all your creative tools. Create an atmosphere where no one has to be scared of being bullied, where your whole personality is recognised. If you want to be inventive, you will have to tread on thin ice. All your sensibilities are required. Every child knows that artists and other ‘geniuses’ need this particular quality - so then why is it so often missing in collective processes and democratic procedures? Relating to what Anne Querrien said in our meeting in Hamburg (in: Park fiction presents: Umsonst & Draussen) when speaking about the production of desires in the urban field, she mentioned that technicians in particular could be a vital part in building a desiring machine, much more than artists. As much as we agree with Anne Querrien’s thoughts on other occasions, we would like to underline here, that
we find it very important to have something like an artistic sensibility introduced into collective processes and desiring machines. (slide 9)

**Let it roll, let it unfold:** related to the point above, we have learned, especially from our collaborations with musicians, that it is important to let a person’s ideas, words, rhythms... unfold. It enables you to join in, instead of responding, too quickly, in a critical fashion. How would people have discussed philosophy walking side by side through the colonnades of a medieval cloister - in contrast to today’s confrontational way: sitting opposite each other? If you want to enter into new territory, it is important to be able to ‘speak into the dirt’, as Mrs. Czenki keeps saying. (slide 10)

Quoting Anne Querrien again: every desiring machine starts with a ‘no’. If all of the above is just used in an affirmative context, in a corporation or in a state organised planning process with a limited outcome and target then it is simply a new tool of governance. A platform is a big ‘yes’, but there is also in this a big ‘no’ against the status quo - and there must always be the possibility to stop collaborating. (slide 11)

**aaa’s question 2**

*What constitutes alternative research?* (slide 12)

Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point is, however, to change it. (slide 13)

Alternative research aims to change given power structures. This change does not come from the top but: from a perspective of everyday life, from thinking together: from what has become detached through bourgeois discourse: passion and the city, happiness and technology. Which attitude determines your view? (slide 14)

When we did conducted research for our Videotaxi, we met in a Macedonian gelaterie in the working class area of Veddel. All of a sudden a picture caught our attention. So I went closer to look: a village in the mountain. But the picture had been taken in an odd way: the sports areas in the foreground featured much too prominently. I was thinking this over, when suddenly an old man started to say, ‘this used to be our village. It has been completely wiped out by a NATO bombing.’ (slide 15 & 16)

A photo, as a polite ‘no’ against the integration into the depoliticised concept of multicultural society.
**Shoes in the city** (slide 17) is a part of a collaborative urban research project by Margit Czenki and hajusom! (1). For these young practitioners, flanery or drifting is not a liberating experience. Every practitioner/researcher has to have his/her own research device. As most of the young practitioners had a great passion for shoes, the research took off when the shoes started to speak about their perspective of the city. (slide 18)

**aaa's question 3**

What are the new ways of urban action and who initiates them? / Are they temporary or lasting? / Are they only critical, confrontational, ‘oppositional’? / Or could they also be transformative, proposing something else, while radically questioning the existing laws, rules, policies, models and modes of working and living in the city? (slide 19)

**Park Fiction** was a breakthrough and the park is now a reality. However, privatisation is starting to set in, as a process of turning the park into a square. The last sketches draw lines of flight out of this mess: Maschine machen is a project scheduled for two years, to create the necessary preconditions for a interaction between art and city. (slide 20)

**Maschine machen** is a desiring machine. Different plug-ins complement each other and intertwine. Maschine machen operates as part of the new Institute for Independent Urbanism on the first floor of the Golden Pudel Klub, in the centre of Park Fiction. (2) From here we want to create a lively connection between musical subcultures, critiques of urbanism and extended art practices.

The institute works through an international network. Plug-ins tap into different themes and contexts and offer the opportunity to connect other modules, to work autonomously, but also enabling thoughts and practices to resonate within a common field. (slide 21)

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1) Hajusom! is a group of young performers who came to Hamburg as refugees without their parents. They live here with an unsecure legal status.
http://www.hajusom.de/

2) The Golden Pudel Klub is the club of the Hamburg underground music scene
http://www.pudel.com/